# BRITAIN'S CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS

THEKLA BOWSER

D 629.G7 B788s 1917a

01110420R

NLM 05007242 8

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

JUL 3 - 1917

SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE

LIBRARY.

Section Hunter Corps

No. 113, W. D. S. G. O.

No. 227302

3—513

# BRITAIN'S CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS

The Voluntary Aid Detachments have taken up every conceivable task in war relief work. The soldiers of every fighting nation at one place or another have been ministered to by these bands of self-sacrificing men and women.

# BRITAIN'S CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS

AUTHORIZED STORY OF BRITISH VOLUNTARY AID DETACHMENT WORK IN THE GREAT WAR

BY

THEKLA BOWSER, F.J.I.
Serving Sister of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY
1917

Copyright, 1917, by
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY

Annex
D
629.G7
B788S
1917a

Published May, 1917

# FOREWORD

HISTORY must needs record with what splendid devotion the women of the warring nations, nobles and peasants, rich and poor, shoulder to shoulder, like members of one stricken family, have united in their endeavour to relieve suffering humanity.

The war has clearly demonstrated that whilst women have been eager and willing to use the greatest gift which God has bestowed upon them—the desire to render service—such service only reached its maximum of efficiency in organised effort.

I fear that any attempt on my part to do justice to one of the finest examples of organised effort—the Voluntary Aid Detachments—must needs be inadequate, partly because there was never a period when publicity was so little sought and when so much that was fine and generous was done so quietly. But those of us who have taken any active part in the service of the Red Cross know that wherever the task was hardest and the danger greatest there was always to be found a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachments not only willing but thoroughly prepared to carry out her allotted duties.

These trained bands of women established before the war in every town, nay, practically in every village, of Great Britain were one of our greatest national assets and of practical use to our Allies.

When it became necessary to staff the small hospitals tucked away in the hills of Britain or to provide orderlies to face the horrible, indescribable conditions existing in a Serbian typhus hospital, the preference was given in every instance to the women of the Voluntary Aid Detachments. We knew that whilst acquiring a good general working knowledge each member had specialised in some branch of the Red Cross work and that she had been required to use her best endeavours to keep herself in perfect physical condition. Not only were the women skilled and healthy, but they had learned the value of obedience to orders. It was that very discipline which prepared them to face the monotony of home service, to confront the dangers abroad, and even, when called on, to sacrifice their lives.

Madge Neill Fraser, the golf champion, was one of the first women of the Voluntary Aid Detachments to lay down her life with the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Serbia.

In a tobacco factory at Nish—where one thousand Serbian typhus patients were crammed into rooms less than twelve feet high, with only slits in the walls for ventilation, straw on the stone

floor, on which the men flung themselves down in their filthy uniforms, whilst on stone benches around they sat in a state of torpor waiting, just waiting, for one of their comrades to die that they might take his place—two of the women went of their own free will and died endeavouring to save the life of a stricken comrade, Dr. Elizabeth Ross. When the news of their deaths reached England in fifteen days 500 members of the Voluntary Aid Detachments volunteered to replace them.

It required not only courage but physical strength when, during the Roumanian retreat, the women patched up a bridge under fire and brought across it over one hundred ambulances laden with helpless men. Not so spectacular, but equally creditable, was the action of those women, trained to economy, who, following in the rear of the retreating Roumanian troops, gathered up and piled on to their transport wagons the food that had been abandoned, so that later, coming on a band of starving soldiers, they were prepared to feed them.

No less brave, certainly as useful, are those women who day after day cook, sew and scrub. Theirs is the quiet heroism of carrying out a tedious daily task, finding consolation in the realisation that their labour forms part of a perfect whole, a thoroughly well organised institution under whose care human wrecks are rebuilt and sent forth clothed, comforted and healed.

Not only have the Voluntary Aid Detachments rendered splendid service to the Armies; they have also taken into their tender care the civilians and refugees. There must be thousands of Belgian and Serbian women who know that they owe their own and their children's lives to these capable and devoted women.

I have been asked whether I believe it possible for the women of America to found a Society similar in its objects and organisation to the Voluntary Aid Detachments. I answer, without hesitation, that, building on the basis of our experience, the American women will not only equal but probably surpass the work we have accomplished.

On my mission of mercy across this great Continent, from North to South and East to West, I have found that in most instances my success was due to the eager and efficient co-operation of the women in each city. I have been more than favorably impressed by the splendid working systems of the Civic Federations, the Women's Clubs, the great colleges and girls' schools in this land. If the women of America would turn their genius for organization to the support of the National League for Woman's Service, within six months there would be existing in every city, town and village a band of skilled women prepared to face and deal with any local disaster or national crisis.

I feel certain that as members of a great democratic nation the American women realise that it

is a duty to train to serve the community as a whole. Whilst to those who willingly shoulder new responsibilities there will come the perfect happiness that alone is found in service and the knowledge that

> "The riches of a commonwealth
> Are clear strong minds and hearts of health,
> And more to her than gold or gain
> The cunning hand and cultured brain."

KATHLEEN BURKE.

Santa Barbara, California, March 26, 1917.

# INTRODUCTION

WHEN the Voluntary Aid Organisation was first set up as part of the Territorial Army Scheme in the year 1909, a number of men and women in various Counties joined the new Organisation at once and began to prepare themselves for the work which it was intended to carry out. They suffered the usual fate of pioneers, and like the Volunteers in mid-Victorian times, were subjected to more or less good-natured ridicule. The War has changed all that. In the first part of the year 1914 not many people knew what the letters "V.A.D." stood for,—now these three letters are universally recognised and honoured. Wherever work has to be done for the sick and wounded either at home or abroad in any one of the numerous War Zones where our men are fighting, there the V.A.D. Member will be found helping the trained nurse in her work of mercy.

It is especially gratifying to know that the trained nurses themselves, who at the beginning of the War looked with some misgivings upon the admission of partially trained women into the Hospitals, are now the first to recognise that these women have "made good" and have loyally and efficiently assisted them in their task. The

V.A.D. Members, both men and women, have every reason to be proud of their record, and I am glad when any book such as this is written which will help the public to a fuller knowledge of their work.

ARTHUR STANLEY.
Chairman,
Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and The Order of St. John.

# CONTENTS


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | Foreword | v |
| | Introduction | xiii |
| I. | Paying a Debt | 1 |
| II. | History of the V.A.D. Movement | 8 |
| III. | The Formation of V.A. Detachments | 17 |
| IV. | The Joining of Two Great Corporations | 23 |
| V. | The Arrival of Wounded at Southampton | 33 |
| VI. | V.A.D. Work in and Around Birmingham | 45 |
| VII. | V.A.D. Work in Manchester and District | 60 |
| VIII. | The Bombardment of a V.A.D. Hospital | 74 |
| IX. | V.A.D. Work in the South | 84 |
| X. | Some of the Work in London | 92 |
| XI. | Air Raid and Other Duties | 106 |
| XII. | V.A.D. Work in Ireland | 118 |

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| XIII. | V.A.D. Work in the Sinn Fein Riots | 127 |
| XIV. | V.A.D. Work in France | 145 |
| XV. | Red Cross and St. John Hospitals in France | 151 |
| XVI. | Rest Stations in France | 164 |
| XVII. | Detention Hospitals in France | 196 |
| XVIII. | Motor V.A.D. Units in France | 202 |
| XIX. | Hostels in France | 206 |
| XX. | V.A.D. Work in French Hospitals | 215 |
| XXI. | Canadian and Overseas V.A.D. Work | 227 |

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


V.A.D. Members in Hospital Work . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Group of V.A.D. Workers . . . . . 2
New Type of Ambulance . . . . . 10
Interior of Same Ambulance . . . . 18
Type of a Large Number of Ambulances . 28
Portable Motor Bath Car . . . . . 40
Motor X-Ray Car . . . . . 56
Disinfectors Mounted on a Steam Lorry . 70
View of the Interior . . . . . 70
St. John Litter . . . . . 86
St. John Litter Packed for Transport . . 86
Motor Launch Sent to Mesopotamia . . 102
Lady Superintendent-in-Chief's Indoor Uniform . . . . . 128
Outdoor Uniform of a Lady Superintendent-in-Chief . . . . . 142
Outdoor Uniform of a Commandant of V.A.D. . . . . 158
Lady District Officer's Uniform . . . 174
Nursing Sister's and V.A.D. Member's Indoor Dress . . . . . 190
Men's Uniforms . . . . . 216

# BRITAIN'S CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS

# BRITAIN'S CIVILIAN VOLUNTEERS

## CHAPTER I

### Paying a Debt

THE Great War has revealed many national truths never even suspected before it burst upon the world, but amongst all its surprises none has been greater than that provided by the success of the Voluntary Aid Detachment Movement. The originators of the scheme knew that they were setting on foot a necessary bit of machinery that must be well oiled and kept in running repair during peace time, so that it might work smoothly when war came; but they did *not* know that they were giving birth to an organisation that was to do more for the bringing together of all classes of society—a real and splendid Socialism that has no connection with the men or women who belong to Socialistic Societies —than any other movement has ever achieved.

The common sorrow of wives and mothers, who have lost their dear ones, has done a great deal towards this end; but the rich woman, in her palatial home, grieves *for* her equally stricken sister in a slum, rather than *with* her. On the

other hand, the Voluntary Aid Detachment authorities, in insisting on one uniform and the same conditions of work for rich and poor, cultured and uncultured, have set up a standard—lofty because of its aim, but lowly in actual fact—which all members must attain without favour.

"Punch" put his finger on the pulse of the situation when he illustrated the raw little Cockney girl, speeding up a member of the aristocracy with some such remark as this: "Nar then, Lady Halexandra, juist you 'urry with washing hup them plates and look sharp abaart it."

It was a picture true to life, and in trying to put down on paper a record of what the British V.A.D. organisation has done since the war commenced, the spirit of this incident will be shewn again and again, under many guises.

In our great cities the effect of all classes working together has been excellent; but it is in the County towns and the villages that the good results have been most marked. The Squire's wife or daughter, having belonged to a V.A.D. perhaps before war broke out, instantly offered her services. Girls serving behind a counter equally with factory girls and workers of every grade, also being anxious to do something for their country, joined a Detachment (if not already members), whilst men of every class, who were not joining the Army, threw in their lot with the V.A.D. in their town. Thus it came about that

This group of V.A.D. members and convalescent patients is an eloquent illustration of what the war has done to challenge the best in Britain's manhood and womanhood.

in the early months of the war men and women of all kinds met together to clean down houses that were to be turned into Hospitals, to act as motor drivers, orderlies—anything and everything—without the slightest consideration being given to their rank in life.

A curious thing happened in a great Hotel which was turned into a Hospital at a very few hours' notice. A late manager and part proprietor of the Hotel, who had recently retired and was living in the town, offered to help, and was put to sweeping down the great staircase after the heavy carpets had been removed. He had never wielded a broom in his life and was struggling with it, not too successfully, when a senior orderly taunted him with not getting on with his job. The pseudo-manager wheeled round at the sound of the voice and then, for the first time, the two men saw each other's faces. The Senior Orderly had been a porter in the Hotel for many years!

No other circumstances could have brought about such a true understanding and appreciation of class for class as this common task has done. Work carried out by educated, cultured men and women in the slums of our great cities, admirable as it is, cannot be the same, because there the more fortunate people are doing acts of kindness, if not of charity, for those worse off than themselves. In the present voluntary work

the Duchess and the factory girl, the over-military-aged aristocrat and the under-military-aged errand boy join hands to do something for the men who are saving our Empire from destruction. It is not only a common foe, a common cause, but a common chord of love and tenderness that has been touched, and the response has been eager, generous, grateful.

There is no question of kindness or of charity. It is the paying of a great debt, a mere matter of common honesty, a privilege beyond price. The highest privilege goes to the man who may fight his country's battles, give his life for his King, risk living a maimed man to the end of his days; next comes the privilege of being of use to these men who are defending us and all we love.

During one of the great pushes, whilst I was working in France amongst our wounded men as they came down from the firing line to the Base, they often said to me, "How good you Sisters are to us," and I, with a catch in my throat, always made one reply. "Good—not a bit of it. Where should we Englishwomen be to-day if it were not for such as you?" Work as we may, sacrifice our comforts, our pleasures, even our health, we non-fighters can never come within sight of paying our debt to the men who have borne the heat and the burden of the day.

What is a "V.A.D.?"

There is, only too often, a misconception about V.A.D. members. Many people seem to think that a V.A.D. member *must* be a woman. In future chapters I hope to show very clearly the wonderful work that has been done by men members, but at the very outset I want my readers to understand that in speaking of V.A.D. members I am referring as much to men as to women, and in fact the numbers of men's V.A. Detachments run very close to the numbers of women's V.A. Detachments. People persist in talking of "V.A.D.'s" as though that was the official name for women Red Cross workers. It is entirely wrong, first because a V.A.D. is a Detachment and not a person, and secondly a V.A.D. member may be, equally, either a man or a woman. Many fully trained nurses are members of V.A. Detachments.

The Joint V.A.D. Committee, which has absolute control of every detail of the work, at home and abroad, is composed of equal numbers of members of the British Red Cross Society, the Ambulance Department of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and the Territorial Force Association.

The labours of V.A.D. members have few limits nowadays. Men and women, belonging to V.A. Detachments, are to be met, not only in every corner of the great British Empire, but also in many foreign lands, and they will be found to be

doing every kind of national work, from the humblest of scrubbing and cleaning to the highest skilled work in nursing and in administration. It is a vast task which I have undertaken, in making even an endeavour to show something of what the movement has accomplished and is now actually doing, but I am quite aware that I cannot possibly cover every branch of V.A.D. activity and I trust my readers will be lenient, whilst I shall be content if I can give a general impression of what V.A.D. members are doing at this crisis in the affairs of the world.

All that I write must be taken simply as being "typical," for to give an account of each and every V.A.D. effort would mean occupying a miniature British Museum Library.

The work is so colossal that it is appallingly difficult to pick and choose as to which shall be mentioned and which left out, but, after travelling many thousands of miles in Great Britain, in order to see V.A.D. Units at work, and spending nearly a year in France as a V.A.D. member myself, it seems to me that the way that would be most fair would be to make a general scheme and try to give some impression of what I have been privileged to see. Having been qualified in First Aid for over fifteen years, a V.A.D. member ever since the movement was initiated, and a war worker from the day war broke out, I have

had peculiar chances of knowing the *inner* side of the work.

It was only after my return from France and whilst I was still an invalid that I thought again of taking up my long-idle pen and of attempting to set down some of the actual facts of V.A.D. work and its ramifications. Had I known the gigantic dimensions of the task I was undertaking, my heart must have failed me, for I had no idea of how far the threads of the Voluntary Aid Movement had stretched throughout our Empire. I can only plead for leniency from my readers and to beg them to try and "read between the lines" of all the great work, the marvellous achievements and the unselfish devotion which have been displayed by the organisers and workers, of which I can but give some glimpse in these pages. Every individual V.A.D. member who reads this record may well thrill with pride at the fact that he or she has been allowed to participate in this great work of patriotism.

## CHAPTER II

### History of the V.A.D. Movement

THE story of the Voluntary Aid Detachment movement is a very romantic one, although the majority of people only see its wonderful utility and versatility, and have some faint understanding of what it has done for the nation since war broke out. The ordinary citizen knows that his daughter has worked, as she never worked in her life before, in this or that Hospital or at a Rest Station perhaps, and that she has faced hardships and even dangers abroad with indomitable pluck; but he does not realise the extent of the work; nor does he know that this same thing, which he sees in his own town, is going on in Egypt, in Malta, in Canada, in India, in South Africa, and in Australia, to say nothing of the hundreds of women who are doing fine work behind the firing line in France.

Although there are thousands of members of V.A. Detachments throughout the United Kingdom, and indeed throughout the British Empire, there are comparatively few of the general public who really understand how the movement was first started or what it has accomplished since

its inception. The work of First Aid and Home Nursing was for many years in the hands of the St. John Ambulance Association, originally (in 1877-78) started to form a civilian reserve to the Army Medical Department in time of war, this organisation having arranged for classes to be held all over the country; in consequence many thousands of men and women knew the rudiments of these arts. Then came the St. John Ambulance Brigade, which was an outcome of the Association, the members of which undertook, voluntarily, public duty on public occasions. But all this later work was for civilians and not especially for war.

During the South African war, the St. John Ambulance Brigade supplied some 2,000 men as orderlies, 70 of whom lost their lives: but at that time there was no thought of utilising for war work the women who belonged to the Brigade or to the Association. In 1905 the British Red Cross Society was founded, and it received its royal charter in 1908. Of course the fundamental object of this society was to supply aid for home defence during war time, and it did not encroach on the civilian work which had been done for many years by the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Then there arose a feeling that Great Britain should emulate other countries in forming some sort of V.A.D. organisation, and with the consent of the War Office schemes were worked out

in 1909 and 1910 which, with but comparatively few alterations, are adhered to to-day.

Few people realise that the V.A. Detachments are a supplement to the Territorial Medical Service. At the time when this scheme was started a great many Voluntary Aid Societies were already in existence; but they had no connection with one another, and thus, in acting independently, frequently overlapped. It was a wise and sensible idea, therefore, that Voluntary Aid should be co-ordinated. It was thought well that the county system, which had been followed by the Territorial Force, should be adopted; and it has proved to be an excellent one, as each county has its own director who has supreme control of all the Detachments in his district, whilst each Detachment is complete in itself, and can undertake distinct pieces of work as separate units.

The medical organisation of the Territorial Force was sufficiently complete to provide medical establishments and units which must accompany troops. It also provided general hospitals, but it lacked such units as clearing hospitals, stationary hospitals, ambulance trains, and other formations. The regular army, of course, had all these units; but it was easy to see that, should occasion arise for the Territorial Force to be enormously increased, there would come the necessity for a great many extra medical units; and

New type of Ambulance designed by W. R. Edwards, Secretary of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

although the pioneers of the V.A.D. scheme could scarcely have anticipated such an overwhelming need as has arisen during these war years, they certainly showed extraordinary prescience in providing an organisation which could be expanded to a limitless extent.

In that early scheme it was settled that amongst the labours which the Detachments must be able to undertake were such as providing food and dressings for improvised ambulance trains, making rest stations where these trains could halt, running private hospitals and convalescent homes. In short, the scheme was devised with the object of giving to those members of the civilian population who, from motives of patriotism and sympathy for the sick and wounded, wished to help opportunities of offering their services for the performance of such duties. It was realised that the members must be trained particularly in the art of improvisation, because their work would be pre-eminently that of coping with emergencies. The members must be capable of filling all sorts of odd niches which the regular medical services could not afford to do.

Should the strain of a great war come upon our country, trained nurses would have their hands full, and their skill must not be wasted; but these members, who would not be *untrained,* but trained in a different way, must be willing to do all the smaller tasks, build, improvise, be

capable of making "the best of a bad job," and, above all, accept discipline unquestionably; in short they must set forth to do the lowliest task from the highest motive. This was the lofty ideal which lay behind the V.A.D. organisation, and I need not say how well it has been carried out. Highly educated women have learnt to scrub floors, to labour with their hands, to undertake disagreeable duties, with no thought of fame or glory, but simply for the sake of sharing in the huge fight which has been thrust upon the British Empire.

It was laid down that members must learn how to prepare country carts and other vehicles for the removal of stretcher cases, must be capable of the improvising of stretchers, and the conversion of houses, public buildings, and railway stations into temporary Hospitals.

For the sake of convenience the Detachments were called Voluntary Aid Detachments, there being two classes, one of men and the other of women; and it was decided that various bodies, approved by the War Office, should raise Detachments, each of which must be officially numbered by the War Office.

Before applicants could be full members of any Detachment, they had to pass the examinations of recognised bodies approved by the War Office, the chief of these being the St. John Ambulance Association and the British Red Cross Society,

the University of London, King's College for Women, and the Church Lads' Brigade.

At first it was arranged that only the certificates of the St. John Ambulance Association should be accepted; but as time went on and other recognised bodies held examinations which were up to the same standard, it was felt that it would facilitate things if they were also accepted. In many instances, this has been a real convenience to people wishing to join a Detachment; but the large proportion of certificates given throughout the country still belongs to the Ambulance Department of the Order of St. John or the British Red Cross Society.

The V.A.D. idea was enthusiastically taken up by many prominent men who knew the needs of Red Cross work in war time.

The scheme was got through very quickly and Detachments were formed. The British Red Cross Society Detachments at once registered themselves as V.A. Detachments, being given a W.O. number, and the majority of the divisions of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and Association also registered themselves, thus becoming an official part of the Red Cross organisation of Great Britain.

It was a clever thought on the part of someone in authority to keep the odd numbers for male Detachments and the even numbers for female

Detachments. This fact led to amusing results recently when a bewildered lady went to see a British Red Cross official and was asked the number of her Detachment. On giving it she was courteously told that it could not possibly be that, whereon she dashed at another number and yet another, each time the smiling official assuring her that she must be wrong. "But how do *you* know?" gasped the poor lady, who was very new to the work. It was, of course, quite simple, since in every case she had mentioned odd numbers!

It is true that an enormous number of Detachments have been formed since the war began, but they have been built on the solid rock of knowledge and experience which were the foundation stones of the Detachments formed in 1910 and the years following. At first the St. John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society held the ground almost exclusively; but in some places, where the Territorial Force Association was a very alert body, Territorial V.A. Detachments already existed.

Looking back on those years of peace, it is curious to remember the various stages of efficiency of the various units. Some Commandants were exceedingly up-to-date and in earnest over their work, their members taking a yearly examination in First Aid and also eagerly attending lectures and passing examinations in such relative subjects as field sanitation, hygiene,

laundry, and invalid cooking. These Detachments would make tremendous efforts to go into camp for a week or a fortnight during the summer, when they lived the real camp life, cooking in field kitchens, building their own field incinerators, and improvising hospital and transport equipment out of the most unpromising material.

Other Detachments were content to meet occasionally for a medical lecture, and to scrape through the yearly inspection which was insisted upon by the War Office officials. This same discrepancy of standard existed throughout the United Kingdom and perhaps was the weak spot in the working out of the scheme. In the first years of the organisation, the political horizon was completely clear of war clouds, and a great deal of good-natured chaff was levelled at the members of Detachments who took their work seriously. It was very much easier for the Detachments belonging to the St. John Ambulance Brigade to go forward with the work in hand, because, side by side with it, they were constantly called out for actual work for civilian purposes. Great credit must therefore be given to the Detachments of the B.R.C.S. and other organisations where a high standard of efficiency was demanded by the Commandants, and attained.

I very well remember paying a week-end visit to a camp of a B.R.C.S. Detachment in the July preceding the outbreak of war. Even then,

though the preliminary tragedy had happened in Austria, no one seriously contemplated that war would touch our own nation. A friend, looking at the strenuous work going on in the camp, said, "Why do they do it? They will never be needed for the real thing." Within a couple of months, that very Detachment was hard at work, and its years of patient endeavour bore fruit which was of incalculable benefit to the country.

## CHAPTER III

### The Formation of V.A. Detachments

IT could have been no easy matter to settle on the exact formation of a Detachment; but again, it is remarkable that the scheme has needed practically no alteration, and that in the printed papers first issued by the War Office the orders are almost identical with those which are in force to-day. The composition of men's Detachments were:—

One Commandant
One medical officer
One Quartermaster
One pharmacist
Four section leaders
Forty-eight men.

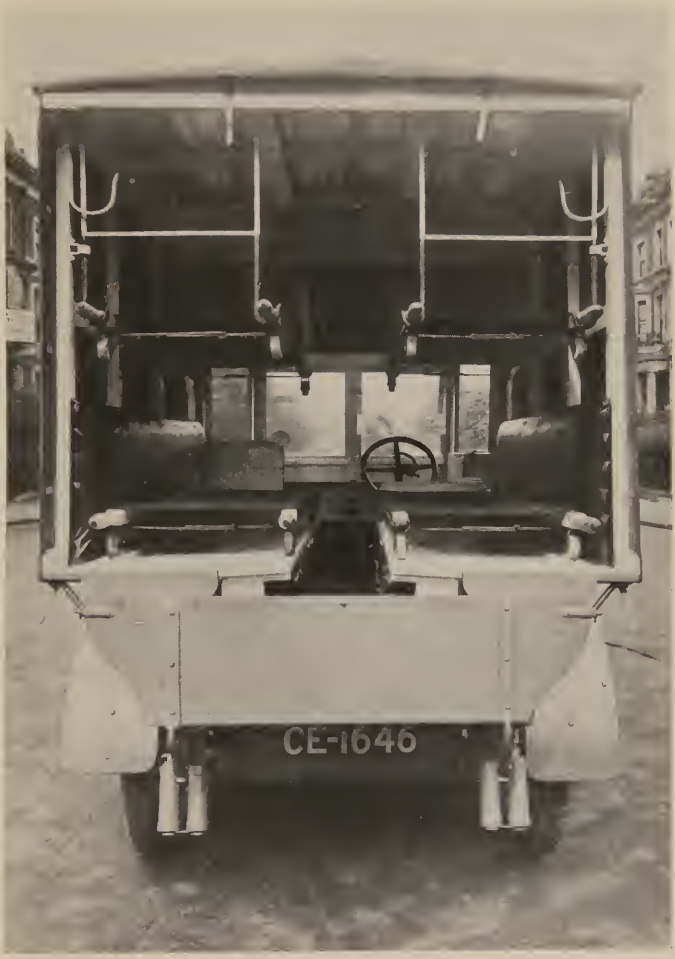
The women's Detachments were considerably smaller, and had only one Commandant (man or woman), one Quartermaster (man or woman), one Lady Superintendent (preferably a trained nurse), and twenty women, of whom four should be qualified as cooks.

V.A.D.'s form part of the technical reserve. No Detachment could be registered at the War Office

unless it had enrolled at least 70 per cent of the above complement. Detachments were invited to make a list of the equipment which they could promise to give in the event of necessity, and certainly a majority, if not all, had a certain amount of linen, beds, and hospital stores in reserve. In the beginning it was supposed that the Detachments would only be used for home defence, in exactly the same way as the Territorials were not supposed to be sent abroad; but we all know how these ideas have been flung to the winds, and how eagerly the men of the Territorial Force and the members of the Detachments have sought for the honour of going abroad, the one to fight and the other to succour the sick and wounded.

In the event of mobilisation, each member of a Detachment, when called up for service, was to be provided with an identity certificate, and was to wear, fixed to the left arm, an armlet or brassard with a red cross on a white ground, delivered and stamped by a competent military authority. This, of course, was in conformity with the Geneva Convention, under which the Detachments work. No one is immune from attack from the enemy who does not wear the protecting sign of the international Red Cross.

It is curious how much ignorance exists on this point, and even to-day people do not understand that this simple red cross does not belong to any




Interior of the new type St. John ambulance, a side view of which is shown in another illustration.

one society, but is the right of every man and woman officially working for the wounded, provided their country subscribed its name to the great Geneva Convention in 1906. Therefore, directly a unit was mobilised by the War Office, its members had to be protected by being given the official sign of their work, and it was no idle remark that was made to a V.A.D. member when she was setting forth for France, "Without your brassard you will not be safe from arrest for a single moment."

Unhappily the enemy has not played the game with regard to the laws of the Geneva Convention, and it has even become a saying that the flying of the red cross is a positive attraction for bombs or for shell, instead of being a protection as was intended; but we can be proud of the fact that we have strictly kept to all the laws of the agreement made in Geneva. We know from first-hand knowledge that German wounded have been treated so well by our Red Cross people that our own wounded have been tempted to be jealous of them, in a laughing kind of way.

There have been some cruel cases of Germans turning upon the British man or woman who was dressing their wounds and attending to their needs; but we realise that the rank and file of the German army has been fed upon lies about us for many a long year, and that it is not the fault of the individual so much as of the system,

which has been carried out with wicked persistency in Germany. It is only fair to say, on the other hand, that there are instances when the German wounded have been really grateful: in one case I am speaking from personal experience, and in the other from first-hand knowledge.

In this connection, I may say that Austrians, when taken prisoners, have shown themselves to be very different from the Germans; and although I have had no personal dealings with them, I know from many friends who have worked on that part of the front that the Austrians made most excellent orderlies and were extremely courteous to the British people. A R.A.M.C. man lately back from the East said he had seen a Turk dress the wounds of an Englishman and then drag him back to the parapet of the British trenches, where he left him to be found by our men!

It was at first thought that no uniform would be necessary for the members of Detachments, but that they would simply wear a distinctive brassard. This must not be confused with the brassard which is given after mobilisation. During peace time, an armlet was worn, or rather a design to be put upon an armlet, on which appeared the registered number of the Detachment. This was worn on the left arm, and is still being worn by many members who are doing excellent work but have not been officially mobilised. The St. John Ambulance Brigade members, of course,

already had their uniforms, and many of the B.R.C.S. Detachments were in uniform long before the war broke out. A few Detachments under the St. John Ambulance Association and the Territorial Association were also uniformed; but the majority of these had not thought it necessary to go to this expense. Since the war commenced, all mobilised units have worn full uniform of one sort or another. It has been a wise proceeding on the part of those who are at the head of the organisation to allow the Detachments to retain the distinctive uniforms of their own societies. In all cases members pay for their own uniforms and their incidental expenses, so that it would be ridiculous to expect them to purchase a particular V.A.D. uniform; but it is practically, with very few exceptions, confined now to the black and white or grey uniform of St. John or the blue uniform of the B.R.C.S. Quite recently there has been a change of cap, a small handkerchief cap having been universally adopted for V.A.D. members of all societies.

To say that minor difficulties have not arisen between the various societies would be ridiculous; but it is a very delightful fact that the members have worked together in much harmony throughout these strenuous years. Perhaps abroad, more than at home, the distinctiveness of societies has been lost sight of, and members have found the common cause of the wounded sufficient to round

off the little corners of individual preference; together they have thrown themselves into this labour of love—a labour which they truly consider to be one of the greatest honours which could fall to the lot of a British subject.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Joining of Two Great Corporations

JUST as the two great rivers, the Rhone and the Arve, run side by side for many miles, without mingling, each keeping its distinctive colour and character, so for many years the two great Red Cross Corporations of Great Britain ran side by side without intimate relationship.

The British Red Cross Society, which was actually Incorporated by Royal Charter in 1908, was the outcome of the much older National Society for Aid to Sick and Wounded in War, and was formed with one great object of rendering assistance to the country in the time of war.

The other, The Ambulance Department of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (incorporated again in 1888 on the ancient foundations laid by the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem who went forth to succour Christians in the Eleventh Century), worked all through the years of peace whilst giving extensive help during the South African War. The civilian work of the St. John Ambulance Brigade is comparatively little known, greatly because its members are enjoined to labour humbly and in silence, like their Knights of old, but thousands of men and women

have worked (entirely voluntarily) in its ranks for the rendering of First Aid to the injured and the sick on all kinds of public occasions and have thus, unconsciously, been trained for the sad work which now has to be done by all Red Cross members.

During the years of peace many of those in high authority in these Societies were closely in touch with one another, but the two organisations ran separately and individually. In 1910 the Voluntary Aid Detachment scheme was started and Detachments were registered from all over the country by both Societies and by the Territorial Force Association, but still there were no signs of commingling.

When the great cloud burst and war was declared, thousands of V.A.D. members, men and women, sprang to attention, and rendered instantaneous and valuable services in divers directions. The work devolving on the two Societies was prodigious and it can easily be realised that double labour was entailed because it was being done *dually* instead of singly.

Slowly, at first, but surely, the two great rivers of mercy and tenderness converged, until in October, 1914, they were officially joined in one huge stream of loving endeavour. Here is another outcome of war and no one can doubt that the joining together of these two powerful forces must make for strength, for charity and for supreme

usefulness. Joined without either losing individuality or identity, the Order of St. John and the British Red Cross have worked together for over two years with the greatest success.

Thus, the calamity of war has created a bond of sympathy, not only between individuals, but between two powerful institutions. This is no time for petty quarrels, and whilst the country welcomes a national Government, the Military authorities and all who are interested in Red Cross work must be glad to see the union of two great Societies, which work with the object of giving the very best help, the most skilled, the most efficient assistance, to every individual man who has been wounded or has become sick in the service of his country.

The joining of the British Red Cross Society and the St. John Ambulance made whole, in the most beautiful sense, a wonderful chain of mercy, the links of which are composed of lofty and lowly tasks alike, given in humbleness of spirit and true gratitude by those who are denied the greatest honour of joining the King's fighting forces.

Enough has been said of the birth of this wonderful voluntary movement, but before plunging into my task I would like to give some idea of the plan upon which I hope to work. First I want to give a picture, as I saw it, of the arrival in

England of our wounded men in Hospital ships and of their rapid transfer to Hospital trains. We will travel in one of these trains and will step off (with thankfulness in our hearts that one has not to be carried on a stretcher like so many of our men) at several great centres and take a look at what is going on, say at Birmingham and at Manchester, since these are two of our largest cities. Then we will take a run down South and perhaps make a call on London on our way back, and must certainly board one of the North-going trains and see all the marvellous work that is going on on the South side of the Tweed. Lancashire must be peeped at and we will brave the perils of the Irish crossing and see for ourselves what V.A.D. workers did during the Sinn Fein riots and are doing for our wounded.

Then from across the sea we must get news of the great work. That in France must hold first place amongst foreign fields and it will not be easy to get away from its fascination to give fair due to our men and women who are making V.A.D. history in Egypt, India, Malta and a dozen other parts of the Empire, whilst other valiant souls are giving urgently needed help to Serbians, Russians, Italians and all the other allied countries.

None of the reports can be exhaustive, but merely *typical,* and it must be remembered that what is actually written about one place is true

of a hundred others, for the spirit of emulation has been so strong, the devotion to duty so amazing, that it would be absolutely untrue to say that members of any one Society had worked better than others, or that one Unit or any group of Units had surpassed others. In a few instances possibly, the standard of work is specially high, but in this book I do not intend to deal with exceptions but with the average of the work, speaking individually of any one Unit *only as being typical of a hundred Units,* and giving names and places of the few only because they give point and meaning to the whole. A general report, absolutely vague, would lose all personality, but it is for that reason only that any names are mentioned and not because these Units are in any way better than their neighbours.

The common cause has gripped the hearts of V.A.D. workers, whether they wear the blue uniform of the British Red Cross Society or the grey of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. It is fine to see that the spirit of entire impartiality, which has always pervaded the Joint Committee, has descended to the individual members of the Units, who realise that in their own hands—roughened with lowly toil—they hold the honour of the whole personnel of the voluntary Red Cross organisation of Great Britain.

Perhaps here I may quote the actual words of General Sir Arthur Sloggett, Director-General of

Medical Services. He says, "I have the highest admiration for them, for the V.A.D. members have performed their duty, and I have repeatedly said that they are one of the great features of the Medical operations of the war and that we could not have got on without them."

*Work at Headquarters.*

No more noble or self-sacrificing work is undertaken by any group of Voluntary Aid workers than that which entails daily attendance at Headquarters for the carrying out of dull, routine, clerical work.

Before the joining of the St. John Ambulance and the British Red Cross Society, the Headquarters of the former, the ancient and historic St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, was an extremely busy place, whilst the same thing could be said of the B.R.C.S. Headquarters. Very soon after the outbreak of war the Duke of Devonshire most generously offered the use of Devonshire House, his magnificent residence in Piccadilly, for the use of the Society, and later the fine premises of the Automobile Club, 83 Pall Mall, were also offered for the same purpose. Now that all British Red Cross work is under the control of the Joint Committee it has been arranged that the various departments should have their permanent abodes at Pall Mall and Devonshire House. At the former there are the chiefs of all

Type of a large number of Ambulances sent out by the St. John Ambulance Association.

the great departments which control the sending out of doctors, nurses, stores and the thousand and one items which are dealt with in such wonderful detail that complete efficiency is the result, whilst at Devonshire House everything connected with the selection and appointment of women V.A.D. members is arranged for.

*A Peep at Devonshire House.*

The moment one enters the entrance hall, one is met by the hall orderly—a girl in uniform—who enquires your business and obtains audience for you, if possible, with the particular person you wish to see. At the back of the hall the Matron interviews every candidate for work in a Hospital and writes a report upon the applicant which is of great value to the selection Board.

Upstairs, there is a series of rooms with connecting doors. It is curious to see them filled with busy, methodical women in place of the gay crowds which one has seen there on enjoyment bent before the war. How many times Royalties have graced these very rooms with their presence at the great Ducal balls and gatherings; now in the place of the lilt of dance music there comes the hum of the typewriter, and instead of pretty speeches being made to fair maidens, girls, anxious to do their country's work, are looked at squarely, uncompromisingly by women who have

learned to sum up character and to sift the wheat from the chaff.

First we enter the Filing Room where everything is filed which comes in and has any reference to any girl or woman who applies for work under the Joint Committee. Then comes the Indexing Room where workers must have fully mastered the intricacies of filing, for here is kept a complete record of each applicant under various headings. All those who have passed the selection Board are pigeon-holed here and there is a fine reserve of workers who can be sent out at a moment's notice. By a clever system it can be seen exactly how many members are working in every hospital or in any capacity whatsoever, and if anyone gives notice she is leaving on a certain day a tab is dropped from the file to indicate that her place is to be filled on that day. The system is simplicity itself and works admirably.

Members are working in Belgium, Egypt, Malta, Salonica, Russia, Serbia, Roumania and Italy, and each one has her place in this Index in Devonshire House.

Then we come to what is known as the Central Index, but it is in fact the V.A.D. life-story of every member who has ever worked under the Red Cross. Here all the records are centralised, as it were, put neatly in compact form but quite irrefutable, so that no arguments can arise as to what services have been rendered. It is a big

work, for there are thousands and thousands of names to be recorded, and everything must be kept up-to-date or the Record would be useless. Every girl who enters an Auxiliary Hospital at home or abroad has her record here, whilst in another room the same thing is done for those members who are at work in Miltary Hospitals.

*Uniform.*

The question of uniform is not an easy one to deal with, but there is a special department at Devonshire House where a little group of workers do nothing else but answer queries and settle small details. Perhaps it would be interesting to give a rough outline of the exact ranks and their correct V.A.D. uniforms.

First there comes the Commandant-in-Chief, (Mrs. Furse).

It was decided that St. John and British Red Cross members should keep to their original distinctive colours, the former having always adhered to the colours of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (black and white or grey), and the latter to blue, white and red.

There are various staff appointments which come immediately in rank after Mrs. Furse, but I do not think it is necessary to mention them all in detail with the exception of Lady Perrott, Lady-Superintendent-in-Chief of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, and Lady Oliver, Mrs. Cane,

Mrs. Dakyn and Miss Crowdy. Then there are Commandants and Quartermasters to each Detachment and the members.

Downstairs there is the Stationery Room, in a bywater of the great house, but nevertheless a very important place, where every department goes for stationery and printed goods of all kinds.

The Postoffice, too, perhaps, would seem to be a dull piece of work, but the members there have a busy time with entering up the hundreds of letters which are received and sent out, the wires and all the odds and ends which come under the term "post."

Devonshire House is a miniature of the greater offices at Pall Mall, but at both headquarters it is noticeable how methodically everything is carried out and on what a business footing everything is done. Probably nine out of ten of these voluntary workers are amateurs in so far that they have learned to do this work since the war began, but there is nothing amateurish about their methods for they have been drilled into efficiency by those who were themselves efficient. The work swings along at a fine pace, increasing day by day, but the workers cheerily shoulder their burdens with the same determination to "win through" which we see in our men, who go back again and again to the trenches with a smile upon their faces and a song upon their lips.

## CHAPTER V

### The Arrival of Wounded at Southampton

NOTHING more beautiful, nor yet more sad, can be seen than a Hospital ship, bringing to the homeland her load of broken humanity. My memory holds many ineffaceable war pictures, but of them all none is clearer than that of a great Hospital ship leaving Boulogne harbour one winter's evening. I was returning from leave, and the Channel boat had to lay aside to allow the ship of mercy to pass out from the French harbour. There was the background of the town, with myriads of dim lights gleaming on its many terraces, whilst from the blackness of the surrounding sea there shone out the huge red crosses, illumined by electric light, from the sides of the white ship, belted with a green band. From the dozens of portholes there streamed light, and from the decks. She was majestic, beautiful, elegant in her fine proportions, but she was a palace of pain at best, though the pain was mitigated by every possible care and comfort and above all by the knowledge that the ship was England-bound!

Day by day these ships come to the berth in

Southampton Docks and discharge their load. A very large number of the orderlies on them are members, either of St. John or British Red Cross V.A. Detachments, but they are disguised by their R.A.M.C. uniforms. The Matron of one of the biggest Hospital ships said that she had found these men wonderful in their work, well-disciplined, steady, willing and cheery. It is not a light nor a delightful task that falls to the share of the Ship-Orderly.

"Last night we had a dreadfully rough passage," said the matron, "and most of us were sick, even the orderlies and the doctors. But none of them gave in. Nearly all the patients too were sick and you can just imagine the amount of work it made for the orderlies."

Yet in the morning they were all cheery as they lifted the stretchers and carried them along the narrow alleyways. The great saloon, which in by-gone days had been the scene of hundreds of festive meals, now accommodates row upon row of beds, whilst the steerage, cleaned and whitened in true ward-fashion, is a mass of beds, ranged in symmetrical lines. There are lifts from deck to deck and every contrivance has been thought of so that the patients may be moved comfortably and quickly. The ship's orderlies get the men ready for removal, the doctors and Sisters, of course, having done the dressings, and then there come aboard stretcher-bearer parties who take

the patients off the ship and put them in the warm sheds on the berth or in the Hospital train.

Here again we meet many V.A.D. workers though they wear the Army uniform and actually belong to the R.A.M.C. But enquire into their history and you will be surprised to find that a large percentage of them originally were members of a Red Cross Detachment. It is a joy to see how well they lift the men, changing them from bed to stretcher with almost imperceptible movements. The gangway from ship to berth is covered in so that the patients are never for a moment in the open, and an R.A.M.C. officer is at hand to direct each stretcher party, either to a certain ward in the waiting Hospital train or to the sheds, warmed by electric stoves, where they are deposited for a short time. As far as possible all patients are sent to Hospitals near to their homes; this entails a lot of work but gives great joy to the men.

From the very beginning of the war a wonderful labour of love and generosity has been carried out very quietly and unostentatiously by two girls. They actually belong, one to a British Red Cross and the other to a St. John Detachment, but they started a special bit of work of their own and are steadfastly keeping to it.

In those terrible weeks when the Belgian towns fell, one after the other, and Belgian wounded and refugees poured into England, Southampton was

the main landing-place, and helpers were needed to feed the poor, hungry people, who had been driven out of their country. Volunteers there were in plenty and for some time a canteen was run in the Docks. It was then that the Misses Tebbutt began to distribute chocolate and cigarettes to the Belgian soldiers. Whilst doing this they heard that there had arrived a Hospital ship laden with British wounded. They asked and gained permission from the dockyard military authorities to be allowed to give these small comforts to the British soldiers.

Ever since that day these two girls have met each Hospital ship (with a very few exceptions) and have given a kindly greeting to our men. They do not wear uniform of any kind, and now they are the only women allowed on the berth, as the authorities had to keep very strictly to certain rules in order that the moving of the wounded should not be hindered in any way. The Misses Tebbutt have such excellent tact, as well as good organisation, that they never get "in the way," giving their cheery greetings and their gifts after the men have been put in the sheds or in the train. They have had boxes made which carry several kinds of cigarettes and of chocolate, and they also have slung on to them a clever pouch with many pockets containing postcards, pencils, matches and newspapers. Not an officer or man is missed, but it often means quick work

when two ships are in at the same time and each girl has to do a whole shipload of men. The entire cost of these gifts has been borne by the Misses Tebbutt and their friends, so that no public funds have been drawn upon for this splendid little welcome which is given to our men the moment they touch the soil of the Homeland.

A good hot drink is given by the authorities to all the patients before the train moves off, and of course on the journey itself they have excellent hot meals.

*Detention Hospital in the Docks.*

But sometimes it happens that a patient will have to be kept in the Docks for several hours and in order that these should be thoroughly well looked after, there exists a small Detention Hospital in the Docks, close to the berths of the Hospital ships.

This little Hospital has the honourable distinction of having been one of the very first to open its doors to the wounded, for it was ready, with six beds, in the very early days of August, 1914. It was staffed by the Southampton Detachment of the British Red Cross Society, and from that day to this the Commandant and two members, together with a very capable R.A.M.C. sergeant and a few orderlies, have lived and worked there. The building is a wooden structure with several rooms in it and in peace time it was used for very

unwarlike purposes, but it has been admirably adapted and really makes a fine little Hospital.

One steps from the Dock into the large ward where are the beds, nearly always full, and at one end there is a well-equipped "dressing" table and dispensary. The doctor or the sergeant dresses all wounds, and the V.A. members keep the place spotlessly clean, do all the clerical work and the cooking. They never know from one moment to another how many patients they may have in for a meal, and have to be prepared for a rush at any time. Very often they have many more than six sent to them for a few hours' rest, and they put them on emergency beds or in comfortable chairs round a fire.

If any of the orderlies, working in the Docks, fall sick, they are sent here to be nursed, and as one of them said to me, "Oh, it's all right there. I had a jolly fine week when I had 'flu."

"Oh, yes, the noise is incessant and especially at night," said one of the members, smilingly, "for all the Army stores are moved by night, but we are used to it after having lived in it for two years!"

A very big task which is undertaken by these ladies is the keeping of a Red Cross Depot, from which every Hospital ship and train replenishes its stores of "comforts" whenever it puts in at Southampton.

This entails an enormous amount of booking

in and out, but probably one reason why gifts come in so freely is that every parcel is acknowledged by a *hand-written* note of thanks. The Store is beautifully kept in very orderly fashion and one of the Hospital Ship's Matrons told me that she was "never refused anything she asked for."

This is a fine little bit of V.A.D. work which is scarcely known to anyone save to the appreciative Medical Military Dockyard authorities, who are constantly in and out of the Detention Hospital and know what good work it is doing.

It is easier to pass through the eye of a needle than to get through the Dock Gates at Southampton; not only does one have to shew one's precious pass to get in, but also to get out again! But I was specially privileged, and I will endeavour to take you with me now in thought, if not in person.

Having seen the Hospital we will go back to the berth and board the Hospital train.

*Hospital Train.*

Here would have been a wonderful subject for Frith's brush—the war aspect of a railway station. Imagine a huge platform, dimly lit; on the one side there lies the great white Hospital ship, and on the other there rests the Hospital train, both bearing conspicuous Red Crosses which should protect them from all enemy attacks.

Between, there are dozens of swiftly moving stretcher parties, but there is no hurry, no bustle. The Surgeon-General and his staff keep sharp eyes on every detail, and an orderly did not seem in the least surprised when the General walked into the little shelter to inspect the making of the hot drinks that were being served. Nothing is too small, too insignificant for officers of high rank to attend to, in order that our wounded men shall have every possible comfort. The men, themselves, are cheery beyond measure because, at last, they are in "Blighty." The stretcher-bearers work very hard and for long hours, and it is good to hear that they are relieved on Sundays by V.A.D. men who are at work in the town all the week.

"It is awfully good of them to give up their Sunday," said a regular orderly to me, "for I don't know what we should do without the rest. Of course when there is a rush on we cannot all get away, but anyhow these Sunday volunteers give all of us a few hours off in turn."

In England Hospital trains have only two tiers of beds, whereas in France they have three. Altogether those over here are smaller, carrying only one Medical officer and two Sisters, instead of three Medical officers and three Sisters. So far, I believe no women V.A.D. nurses are employed on Hospital trains in England, but a great number are now carried on Hospital ships.

Portable Motor Bath Car, with ten collapsible baths, sent out by the St. John Ambulance Association.

The cruel loss of The Britannia showed the fine discipline of the entire staff, including a large number of men and women V.A.D. members.

The Hospital trains in England have usually been adapted from ordinary rolling-stock, but they have special connecting corridors between each carriage so that there is no jar on starting or stopping. On the train there is an operating theatre, where emergency operations can be performed if necessary, and where all the dressings of "walking" cases are done.

The cots in the train are extremely comfortable and well sprung. In many cases milk wagons have been utilised and serve excellently to accommodate ten stretchers, which are put on trestles and are made up with mattresses. If movement is likely to injure a man his stretcher can be put straight on to one of these trestles. The wagons are painted white and look very bright and comfortable, and as all carriages communicate with one another, the staff can get through to see all the patients throughout the journey. Hot meals are served to the men, all the food being cooked on the train in the cleverly contrived kitchen wagon, and of course all necessary dressings are done.

Before we actually commence our journey northwards I want to give you a glimpse of a Hospital, not far from Southampton, which is especially unique.

*Clearing Hospital in England.*

In order that men with comparatively small wounds ("walking cases" as they are known) should not take up valuable space in Ambulance trains, a very large number of them are sent to the Clearing Hospital near to Southampton where they are kept for a few days and then sent in special carriages by ordinary trains to Hospitals near to their homes.

Lt.-Colonel Twiss, R.A.M.C., has for many years been keenly interested in St. John Ambulance work, so that when he was asked to organise this Hospital he got as his staff St. John Ambulance Brigade Orderlies. These men, to a certain extent, are members of V.A. Detachments, but they were all voluntary workers, so that if we take the spirit rather than the letter of the law, their work may well be recorded here, after they had become R.A.M.C.

The Council schools were commandeered, but they would not accommodate the thousand-odd beds Colonel Twiss was to have under his care, so that Armstrong huts were set up in the adjoining Park, and with the use of various church halls the Hospital is very complete. The constant coming and going of large convoys makes the work exceptionally heavy. It is no uncommon thing for some hundreds of patients to be in and out again in three days. This means a big test of

organisation and of the orderlies' work, but the officers have nothing but praise for their staff. As need for skilled orderlies abroad increases, a great many St. John men are taken from all the home hospitals, and Colonel Twiss has had to fill their places with recruits, but many of these are V.A.D. men and are doing admirable work. No Sisters are employed in this Hospital.

*Southampton Hospitals.*

In and around Southampton there are several excellently managed V.A.D. Hospitals, but as this same remark could be made about practically every part of the United Kingdom, I do not propose to mention them in particular; but a bit of V.A.D. work which should not be missed is that which was done by St. John members in the very early weeks of August, 1914, and continued for over a year.

It was discovered by an enthusiastic Ambulance worker that the thousands of troops who were being brought to Southampton and stationed on the Common in tents for one night before their departure to France were very badly wanting a Canteen where they could obtain a hot drink and some food, free.

A large tent was obtained with considerable difficulty and equipped as a Canteen. This was kept open day and night by shifts of V.A.D. workers, men and women, and they rendered

signal service to the weary troops who were about to set forth to the Front. The officers were almost as badly in need of help as the men, and after a very few days a smaller tent was arranged as an Officers' Mess-room.

This is only one of the sidelights, as it were, on V.A.D. work. It was not their legitimate work as it was not for wounded men, and in a sense it was done unofficially, and of course no St. John funds were used for it; but there is no doubt that it filled in a gap at a moment when it was quite impossible for the Army to cope with all the smaller details of making arrangements for the comfort of the men.

## CHAPTER VI

### V.A.D. Work in and Around Birmingham

SO far I have had but little occasion to speak of women in V.A.D. work, for, naturally, it falls to the share of the men members to manage the transport of our wounded men.

Since, as privileged travellers, we stepped upon the Ambulance train at Southampton Docks, we have been running swiftly and smoothly northwards, and now, as the train draws into the great station at Snow Hill, Birmingham, we see a unique and very attractive sight.

*Birmingham Rest Station.*

The fame of the Birmingham Rest Station has spread far and wide. Even in France I heard it spoken of in tender accents, and though there are others in England, it is so particularly well managed, with such strict discipline, that I hope everyone will agree that I do well in describing it in order to show what Rest Station work means.

The patients on all Ambulance trains are well fed, but an extra meal seldom comes amiss to Tommy, especially when unusual fare is served to them under somewhat unusual circumstances.

Looking from the carriage window, the patients

in the train see, on the platform, two files of nursing members standing in front of big lorries upon which are set tea-urns, mugs, sandwiches, cakes and fruit. There is a shrill whistle and orderlies appear at once in each ward of the train, bearing trays filled with mugs of tea, whilst behind them come nurses with food and fruit. A little later, cigarettes, pipes, tobacco and postcards are brought round.

"It is extraordinary, the difference that is noticeable in the men after we have been to Birmingham," said an Army Sister to me. "There is quite a change in them, for the kindly thought and the bright words of greeting cheer them infinitely, and make them realise what it means to be 'home' again."

Every train has been met since the first one came at very short notice in the early days of the war. The members of a Birmingham V.A.D. rushed down to the station and had food ready for that train, and without a lapse the work has gone on ever since. A room on the station has been given up, very courteously, by the railway authorities, and a huge amount of work is got through there by V.A. members under their Corps Commandant, Mrs. Porter. The cost falls entirely upon Birmingham, and so well do the townspeople appreciate this fine work that there is never any difficulty in gathering in funds for the Rest Station.

Directly the train is signalled the platform is cleared of all outsiders, and the doors of the improvised kitchen are thrown open to allow of the exit of two files of nurses, spick-and-span in their grey cotton frocks, white aprons, and black bonnets. One file turns to the right and the other to the left, and march to where stand the two trolleys laden with food. Nothing is forgotten. There are even postcards and pencils so that the men can write messages to their friends, and the cards are collected and stamped by the nursing members. Slowly the train draws into the station, bearing on its sides the great red crosses which should claim exemption from molestation all over the world.

The time for which each train is allowed to halt in the station flies by all too quickly, but the men have managed to make an astonishingly good meal, and at the word of command cups are collected and the members and orderlies again take their places by the now empty trolleys, and with many a last word the train steams away with its load of broken humanity; broken only in a physical sense for the men's spirits are higher than ever, their courage more indomitable, their cheeriness so inspiring that the ordinary sufferer is put to shame.

It all sounds very simple, this feeding of wounded men on trains, but it needs fine organisation, a great deal of hard work, and a consider-

able amount of money. Some days the trains come in thick and fast, the biggest day being that on which 700 wounded men passed through Snow Hill station. But never yet has an Ambulance train come into Birmingham without these two lines of St. John V.A.D. members being there to greet the men.

The Hospital train is going on to Manchester and the North, but we will step off at Birmingham with the comfortable knowledge that a little later on we will board another of the trains and pay surprise visits to several of the great Northern cities.

Birmingham is a great centre for V.A.D. work, and we will take it as typical of St. John work, whilst Manchester will be typical of British Red Cross work. As a matter of fact, in both the cities workers of the two societies are to be found, but it is curious that the majority of the one or the other generally predominates in every centre. After all, it is merely a "distinction without a difference," and as a great Red Cross authority says humourously when he is interviewing V.A.D. candidates, " Do you want to wear a blue frock or a grey one?" It is a fine thing that the differences of past years should have converged so that they have practically arrived at vanishing point, and can be summed up in the utterly unimportant question of the colour of the dress one wears!

V.A. workers have no time for petty quarrels. They are doing the nation's work; and they raise their heads, fixing their eyes upon an aim which is lofty enough to be Christlike, and must not be sullied by any sordid considerations.

During that first week in August, 1914, a huge number of men who had qualified in First Aid and Nursing were called away from Birmingham to serve with H.M. Forces; but courses of lectures were set going then and have gone on ever since, so that recruits have been brought in to fill the places of those who have gone away.

Nursing Detachments were already very strong in Birmingham, and a great many of the members having had experience in the Homœopathic Hospital, they were quite qualified to act as probationers under trained nurses in Auxiliary Hospitals.

Several buildings had been promised for use as V.A.D. Hospitals "in case of invasion," but as there was no invasion the contracts all fell through, and new efforts had to be made for the obtaining of houses which could be turned into Hospitals. But before any one of these was actually started, the nursing members were made use of for emergency services of all kinds. Birmingham, if not invaded by the enemy, was certainly invaded by Belgian refugees, and a great deal of voluntary work for them was carried out by the V.A.D. members.

The first V.A.D. Hospital to be started in Birmingham was staffed by a St. John Detachment, the house being Hill Crest, Richmond Hill. Thirty beds were put in the house, and later on thirteen open-air shelters were put up to increase the number to fifty. Many wounded Belgians were received here in the autumn of 1914. The equipment and maintenance of this Hospital, as indeed of all the Hospitals in the Birmingham district, have been entirely given by friends in the neighbourhood.

Later on, this Hospital was moved to Harborne Hall, a very beautiful house which is particularly well adapted to the purposes of a Hospital. An outstanding feature of this Hospital is that a laundry is provided in which the whole of the washing is done for the entire establishment. Many V.A.D. members work here daily, and by their labours effect a very large saving in expense and much additional comfort to the patients.

During the great July push the matron of this Hospital was rung up and asked if she could suddenly accommodate twenty-five men who were coming on a Hospital train. Every bed in the house was full, but she was determined not to refuse to take in these men. She and her staff quickly arranged spare mattresses on the two large billiard tables and on various sofas in the

day-room, and on to these they put their convalescent patients, so that within an incredibly short time they were ready to receive the wounded men who had come direct from the Front. This was a piece of quick work which showed resource and adaptability, and is a typical case of what has been done over and over again in V.A.D. Hospitals.

Following quickly on the heels of this first Hospital there were opened five others, all of them being excellently equipped and managed. Perhaps a special word may be given to the Highbury Hospital as it has a particular interest, since it was for many years the residence of the late Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, and was put at the disposal of the War Office by the Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain. The equipment of the house and the provision of funds for its maintenance were most generously undertaken by the employés of a huge munition factory in Birmingham.

It is famous for its Neurological Department with its up-to-date electrical appliances and staff of fully qualified nurses. It has accommodation for one hundred and ninety beds, some thirty of these being in a very beautiful open-air pavilion which has been built in the grounds. Here again the laundry work has been carried out by V.A.D. members, the sum of £4 being saved weekly.

*Handicrafts for Patients.*

In several of the Birmingham Hospitals, as indeed in the Auxiliary Hospitals all over the country, a special effort has been made to teach the men handicrafts, not only with the view of giving them employment and amusement, but possibly of helping them to earn money later on by their acquired skill.

There was quite a rage in Highbury Hospitals for the making of plaster casts, the men copying the Army badges with great faithfulness. Then there were sketching classes, shorthand and typewriting classes, knitting, crocheting and woolwork classes, wool mat-making, cross-stitch belt making, and basket-making classes, and a good many of the men were tremendously interested in attending French classes.

At Ashfield Hospital, Gt. Malvern, which comes under the Birmingham administration, they have made a feature of teaching carpentry to the convalescent patients. They have set up an excellent bench in an outhouse in a loft, and a carpenter V.A.D. member has generously undertaken to give the men lessons. They are taught to make the most fascinating wooden toys in the fashion of those which used to come to us in thousands from Germany. It is to be hoped that many of the men who are incapable of returning to their own trades will find a means of livelihood in

carrying on the various handicrafts which they have begun to learn in our Auxiliary Hospitals.

At Lordswood Hospital many of the men work in the kitchen garden as soon as they are convalescent, and it is not only a healthy employment, but gives them a valuable insight into outdoor work.

*A New Departure in V.A.D. Work.*

It fell to the lot of the St. John V.A.D. members in Birmingham to be amongst the first, if not actually the very first, people to make a new departure in their nursing labours. For a long time the District Nursing Societies of many great cities have been in distress by reason of the shortage of trained nurses. A very large number of district nurses are at work abroad or hold onerous positions in Military Hospitals at home. This has meant that the poor in all parts of the Kingdom have had to go "short" in the matter of district nursing. It is a thing of national importance that women and babies should be well looked after at this crisis, for we must think forward, and remember that the infants of to-day mean our fighting forces of the future.

The Superintendent of the District Nursing Society in Birmingham decided to apply to the St. John authorities for help, with the result that some eighteen to twenty V.A.D. members regularly work as district nurses amongst the poor

of Birmingham. Each one goes on a month's probation and works with the trained Sister. Then if she shows proficiency she is allowed to go to cases by herself and to do a regular daily round; but she is never allowed to go to a new case, these always being undertaken by a trained Sister. The result has been most successful, and it has been arranged that the District Nursing Society should grant certificates for three and six months' good continuous work to V.A.D. members.

May we quote the words of the Vice-President of the Nursing Society who said: "For forty-two years this Society has maintained the principle that only nurses with the highest professional training are qualified to undertake the district nursing among the poor. The exigencies of war have broken down the continuity of this principle, and your Committee has gratefully accepted the assistance of the St. John Ambulance Brigade who have done sterling work in the absence of their professional sisters."

It is quite likely that before these words are in print the example will have been copied in many great cities, thus giving the V.A.D. members a new chance of proving their usefulness in coming to the aid of the nation, and doing war work which is very humble and very lowly in itself, but is of the highest importance to the Empire.

*Quick Work.*

To be efficient, V.A.D. members must be quick and ready to grapple with any emergency that comes along. It is interesting to hear a few of the queer cases in which members have been called upon to give their help.

For instance, there was a shortage of helpers at "Our Day" collection in Birmingham, and on the day previous to the collection eighty girls were got together and told the street stations which they were to take up on the following day.

Highbury Hospital was to have been opened on a certain Monday, but the July push came, and on the previous Saturday they were suddenly rung up and asked to take in forty men. This they did, although at the moment the telephone rang there were not forty beds in position, even!

With regard to the Hospital trains which come through Birmingham, the sudden calls are so frequent that they are not looked upon as peculiar but as being in the natural course of affairs. The V.A.D. member who acts as secretary for that particular work thinks nothing of going to bed with the telephone lying on the pillow so that there will be no chance of her not hearing the bell.

During the rush of Belgian refugees the Matron

of the Dudley Road Infirmary, where they were being accommodated, suddenly rang up and asked if she could have eight V.A.D. members within one hour. They were supplied, and since then there have been various calls of this kind from the Matron, who knows that she can be certain, not only of getting the members, but that they will implicitly obey her orders and will work without question on any job to which she cares to put them. She has paid them the high tribute of saying that they are both obedient and reliable.

*Motor Transport V.A.D.*

For a very long while after the war broke out men and women who were motor drivers gave their services, and in some cases loaned their cars, for the purpose of conveying wounded men from the Hospital trains to the Hospitals. Later on it was thought well that there should be Motor Transport Voluntary Aid Detachments, and they are now at work in many centres all over the Kingdom.

I had the great privilege of going out on a night convoy at Birmingham. The car I went on was driven by a girl, and it was quite wonderful to see how she made her way through the pitch-dark streets and took her place in the yard of the improvised station where the Hospital trains came to a halt.

The scene was a bizarre one, and took me back

Motor X-Ray Car presented by Sir John Holder to the St. John Ambulance Association, sent to within a few miles of the Verdun front.

to France, because the continuous rain had made the roads very muddy, (France and mud will always be connected in my mind,) and the platform which had been put up at this siding was an extremely rough one. Dozens of ambulances and motor cars were ranged up in the yard, whilst on the platform there awaited several squads of V.A.D. men with stretchers and blankets ready for the transfer of the wounded men.

The moment the Hospital train arrived the M.O. of the train jumped out and spoke to the Superintendent in charge of the V.A. stretcher-bearers. He was informed that there were a hundred and eighty cases on the train, a hundred of them being "cot cases," which meant that they must be removed by a stretcher. At a word of command the V.A.D. men sprang to attention and forthwith set to work. They carried their stretchers into the train, they moved the patients with the utmost gentleness, they carried them down the slope and put them into the ambulances, and at the end of fifty-three minutes the whole of those hundred and eighty cases had been sent off to Hospital.

The motor cars make several journeys during each convoy, going to the various Hospitals to which the patients are designated. Everything works smoothly; there is no sort of confusion, and I, as a privileged person on the front seat of one

of the ambulances (driven this time by a man V.A.D. member), could not help marvelling at the organisation which made things work so well.

Practically every one of the V.A.D. men and women who run these motor convoys are at work in the day, the men for the most part being in business in the city.

"But where does your sleep come in?" said I to one of them. "How much did you get to-night?"

Personally I had had a few hours in bed as I had not been called out until 3 A.M., but the man I spoke to replied cheerily:

"Oh, I got the telephone message so late that it was not worth while going to bed, so I sat down in a comfortable chair over the fire, and my wife gave me and several other members of the convoy a good meal at 2 A.M. Then we had to start for the station. I shall get back in time to have a bath and eight o'clock breakfast, and then I shall be off for business."

"But you cannot do that sort of thing often," I remonstrated.

"Oh, yes," he answered; "three or four nights a week. It is wonderful how we have learned to do without sleep since the war began, and I really doubt if we are any the worse for it."

There was nothing heroic about his tone, and he evidently felt that he was doing the most ordi-

nary work possible. This is quite a good example of what is being done quietly and without any ostentation by the members of the Voluntary Aid Movement throughout the Kingdom.

## CHAPTER VII

### V.A.D. Work in Manchester and District

IT is not much of a run in a Hospital train from Birmingham to Manchester, and again we will step off at the great station and make a flying visit to the wonderful V.A.D. Hospitals which lie all round the city.

Lancashire is always enthusiastic in whatever work it takes up, and has shown itself to be splendidly loyal not only in giving thousands of men as combatants to the Forces, but in giving itself unreservedly to V.A.D. work.

Never shall I forget going to a Hospital in one of the manufacturing towns of Lancashire where the entire work was undertaken by mill girls. It was a small Hospital, and the skilled nursing could be done by the one trained Sister who was in charge. Under her she had a very large staff of girls and women who mostly had to earn their daily bread by working in factories from early morning until evening.

These women live hard lives at all times, but they ungrudgingly give hours from their nights in order to get up at five in the morning and go to the Hospital to scrub and to clean until they

are due at the factory. Again at the other end of the day, after they have done long hours at monotonous and often arduous work, they go into the Hospital on their way home and give another couple of hours to the serving of the evening meal, the making of beds, and the general tidying up of the wards. The work during the day is divided amongst the women who have homes and children to tend and can only spare an hour or two away from them.

All these women do not give of their surplus; they give something which costs them a great deal. They give it willingly, smilingly, and as though theirs is the privilege, which indeed it is. I wish I could take a few rich, leisured women, who still have not answered their country's call, and show them this beautiful little Hospital, admirably run, clean and tidy as a new pin, which is entirely the outcome of the loving labour of women who have to work very hard indeed, in order to keep themselves in the bare necessities of life.

*East Lancashire.*

In East Lancashire alone there are sixty-one Hospitals under the British Red Cross Society or the Order of St. John, the total number of beds being 4,227. A very large majority of these Hospitals are worked by British Red Cross V.A.D. members; the East Lancashire branch of the So-

ciety having been formed as long ago as 1910, with the primary object of organising and training the civilian population during times of peace so as to enable them to assist the Military authorities in time of war.

There was a total membership of 3,000 men and 1,000 women registered at the War Office in V.A. Detachments, and on the outbreak of war all these Detachments were ready for work. Forty Comforts Sections were instituted with a leader in charge of each, who in turn organised sewing parties in his or her particular district.

The first Hospital up here to receive War Office sanction was Worsley Hall, but the first to open and actually receive patients was The Woodlands, Wigan, (opened on October 6th,) which was placed at the disposal of the Branch by the Earl and Countess of Crawford, who generously provide all cost of the maintenance of the Hospital, which receives no Government grant. This Hospital with a hundred and thirty beds has been maintained by the Branch without any cost to the Government *as the gift of the East Lancashire Branch of the British Red Cross Society* to the nation.

Here again fine transport work has been done. Owners of motor cars were approached and a splendid fleet of ambulances and cars was soon available.

*An Amusing Story.*

A very funny story was told to me by a great Red Cross worker in Manchester. He said that people wondered why things did not always go like clockwork; and he thought that the answer given on the telephone at the commencement of the war by one of the Section Leaders to a car owner, who asked for two days' notice to be given when the car was required, really put the case in a nutshell. The Section Leader, with a fine sense of humour, replied to this request, "If you will please arrange with the Kaiser to give us two days' notice of his soldiers' intention to attack ours, I shall be very pleased to give you the two days' notice you require."

But it is the exception and not the rule to find people unreasonable once they have put their hand to V.A.D. work. There is something very infectious about it which makes men and women quickly realise that they must be prompt, that they must put their private feelings on one side, and above all that they must not be quarrelsome.

*Ambulance Work in Munition Factories.*

A certain number of V.A.D. members in Manchester are regularly on duty at munition factories. This is only typical of what is going on all over the country.

I had the unusual privilege of going through

one of the great munition factories and seeing for myself exactly how the Ambulance Department was managed. They had set aside a small building for the work, and everybody in the factory knew where it was, and that Ambulance men and women were on duty there night and day. Thus they get small cases to attend to throughout the twenty-four hours, because in practically all munition works the furnaces are never allowed to go out, and there are different shifts of workers, so that the making of munitions never ceases for one moment, day or night.

In the Ambulance rooms there are beds and all the equipment necessary to deal with accidents. Of course they must always be prepared for a possible explosion, although happily these very rarely occur. Then there are men and women who are working regularly with explosives, whilst others are dealing with boiling vitriol and molten metal. All these are distinctly dangerous jobs, and when familiarity has bred contempt accidents may occur.

V.A.D. members who are very well qualified and have had a lot of experience work in shifts in these Ambulance rooms. There is a stretcher party of men who are sent for in the case of accident, and who quickly convey the injured person to the accident room after First Aid has been rendered on the spot. A stretcher and necessary dressings are kept at hand in all the big "shops,"

and there are always people amongst the workers who are qualified in First Aid and can give assistance instantly an accident occurs.

In one of the munition factories where two V.A.D. nurses are always in attendance, the night and day work being managed in three shifts, one thousand small accidents were attended to during the first seven weeks after the Ambulance room was opened.

*Joint Hospitals.*

Several of the Hospitals in the Manchester district are staffed by St. John and British Red Cross Society members, and it is delightful to know that there is no friction between them. All sorts of novel ideas have been thought of for the raising of funds, because each of these Hospitals prides itself on the fact that it is self-supporting.

*Novel Entertainment.*

The Moss Bridge Red Cross and St. John Hospital raised £89 to pay the remaining debt off the new wing by very novel methods. A garden-party was held in the grounds, the most attractive feature of it being a trench "somewhere in France," made and manned by wounded soldiers from the Hospital. On the right of the trench was a dugout, and hundreds of visitors traversed the anything but easy road which led to this realistic scene. There were two sections of

trenches, loop-holed and protected by barbed wire. Visitors were shown the working of a periscope from the trenches, and the gas-protector helmets were clearly explained by a corporal.

Within a month another garden-party was held, and on this occasion, in addition to again giving a most vivid representation of trenches, there was an interesting innovation. This was a camp-life scene, and the soldiers sold tea made in dixies over regular camp fires.

The two garden-parties realised the sum of £370, out of which an X-ray apparatus has been purchased for the Hospital. This speaks for the ingenuity of V.A.D. members.

*Ambulance Drill Halls as Hospitals.*

In many cases in Lancashire the excellent drill halls owned by St. John or British Red Cross Detachments have been converted into Hospitals. Perhaps one of the most typically successful is that at Rochdale. Very soon after the outbreak of war it was converted into a Hospital with thirty beds, and has a wonderful little operating theatre and all the necessary offices.

In Lancashire there is the largest V.A.D. Hospital in the United Kingdom, and it is run by St. John Detachments. It is situated in the Grange, Southport, and has 500 beds. In December, 1915, the Director-General of Medical Services

visited the Hospital and said that it must become a Primary one instead of an Auxiliary. When it was found that its accommodation must be increased by having open-air huts set up, the work was effected in seven weeks, the ground which had been a kitchen garden being quickly converted into the site of a very up-to-date Hospital.

Here we see another branch of V.A.D. work, which again is typical of what is going on in every district. V.A.D. Pharmacists in this Hospital have control of an enormous store of dressings and drugs. Three quarters of a ton of cotton wool, and 10,000 yards of gauze, bought in the cheapest competitive market, is an incident in their work. The dispensaries are busy at midnight instead of in the day, for the chemists come after their businesses are closed, and toil into the night at the Hospitals, preparing the lotions for the next day's work in the wards, making mixtures, and attending the many orders which have come in from nurses and doctors during the day.

The kitchen V.A.D. members here have no sinecure. For instance, the peeling and slicing of 186 pounds of potatoes, the cleaning of 200 knives, forks and spoons, the scouring of sinks and boilers, is a magnificent piece of voluntary work of which Southport may be justly proud.

*Blanket Day.*

This was a bright idea, a reception being held in Hesketh Park, admission being by blanket, which raised 1,000 of these necessary articles.

*V.A.D. Sewing Room.*

The Lady Quartermasters have organised this department, an enormous amount of repairing and stitching having been done there; 4,479 yards of material have been cut out in the Hospital itself and made up by voluntary workers.

*Convoys.*

It is not anything unusual for the Hospital to get word of the arrival of a hundred or more patients straight from the train within a few hours, and they are taken into the Hospital without any delay.

*Fire.*

A guard of the Southport Voluntary Training Corps is on duty at night in case of fire.

*Another Instance of Quick Work.*

The Commandant of the Southport Hospital had one short day's notice that he must provide accommodation for seventy-five men. At that moment he had only twenty-five beds empty. They took a house opposite and equipped it, and the same evening received the extra patients.

We cannot pass over the V.A.D. work in East

Lancashire without touching on some of the beautiful houses which have been converted into Hospitals. Two of the Hospitals, Worsley Hall and The Woodlands, Wigan, receive no Government grant.

I purposely do not mention any names as it would be invidious to do so, for it is quite impossible to say that any one man or woman has worked better than any other, or that any of the great people who have lent their mansions and have given most generous support have been more kindly than the humbler folk who have lent their houses and have given every penny they could spare to the work of succouring the wounded.

The whole object of this book would be defeated if it were thought to be written about any particular Hospital or department of V.A.D. work. As I have said before, I am trying to give a wide outlook of the work as a whole, and only pick out instances here and there to make my point more emphatic, and to show what is being done by the thousands of men and women who have thrown themselves into the V.A.D. movement.

*A Typical V.A.D. Hospital.*

Call to mind a quiet country town, with its old-world buildings and its quaint little High Street nestling beneath the shadow of the wonderful Cumberland hills.

I had motored up from Lancashire through the noisy, dirty, bustling manufacturing towns, where the streets are crowded with women wearing shawls over their heads, and with children who made a great clatter in their iron-ringed clogs; the car slid through these populous towns out into the wide country beyond, and gradually we approached the mist-clad hills which shelter the beautiful lakes of Cumberland.

The Friends' Meeting House had generously been loaned for the duration of the war to a V.A. Detachment, and it had been made into an excellent Hospital. Turning sharply out of the High Street under a covered archway, the car suddenly came to a standstill, and we found ourselves being greeted by the Commandant, who forthwith took us all over the little Hospital. Every bed was filled with a wounded man, but cheeriness prevailed in all the wards, and the men were not loath to say how glad they were to be there.

It struck me then that the effect of such a Hospital as this was a deeper one than that which appeared on the surface. It had been set up in order to heal broken men, but in the carrying out of this merciful work people of every grade had been brought together and had worked in sympathy one with another.

The well-born woman, who perhaps had never set her hand to rough toil before, met her lowlier

Disinfectors mounted on a steam lorry. Sent to France by the Order of St. John for use of a British Regiment.

A view of the interior. The lorry supplies steam for the disinfectors.

sister on level ground; the trades-people of the little town were proud to send in gifts; the farmers in outlying farms gave eggs and butter; workmen of many trades had given their valuable time in order to make the Hospital as perfect as possible.

Imagine the moral if not ethical effects upon these people of every class, drawn together by one common cause, one national sorrow. Surely the result of the establishment of hundreds of V.A.D. Hospitals throughout our land must have some lasting influence on the people of Great Britain.

It is an aspect of V.A.D. work which should not be overlooked; and whilst one does not want to be unpractical, nor can one have any delusions that small disagreements have not constantly occurred in all kinds of nursing institutions, the work in the main has been carried on with a generosity of spirit and a "following after the gleam," as Tennyson would have put it, which cannot fail to have its good effect on the better national understanding of class for class.

*V.A.D. Victim of German Treachery.*

One of the very earliest of the many V.A.D. members who have given their lives for their country was a woman of humble circumstances who was working in a Lancashire V.A.D. Hospital. I was being shown through the Hospital by the Commandant a few days after she

had met her tragic death, and he told me all about it.

She had worked in the Hospital so arduously that her health broke down and the doctor said that she must have a rest. She was not in a position to take a holiday, but having the chance of going as stewardess on a boat, seized the opportunity gladly. It was a comparatively small boat, and she was one of very few women on her. A German submarine chased them, ordered them to stop, and gave the Captain five minutes to put all his people into small boats. Our V.A.D. member was climbing down the side into the boat just about three minutes after the order had been given, when one of the Germans, it is alleged, deliberately shot her and she fell dead into the sea.

Since that day, alas, the list of V.A.D. men and women who have fallen has become an appallingly long one. If it were possible I should like to give the name and the story of each one individually here, but that is out of the question. Whilst I shall touch on the details of some of those members who have given their lives in the cause, I hope it will be understood that they are typical cases only, and that I am perfectly well aware that whilst I speak of the few members of whom I know personally, there are dozens of others quite as magnificent who must perforce remain unmentioned.

There have been many instances of girls going out to Hospitals in foreign lands and dying of disease. There was one young girl, a V.A.D. member, who had been in Egypt only one week when she contracted typhoid fever and died. There have been nurses in France who have become fatally ill; there have been the men and women on Hospital ships which have been torpedoed; and there is a huge number of members who have either seriously injured themselves in the course of their work, or have contracted such illnesses that they will never be absolutely fit again.

It is all taken as part and parcel of the work. There is no thought of grumbling; in fact it is almost the other way about; for the V.A.D. member recognises that it is a tremendous privilege to be allowed to share in some slight measure the dangers and the risks which our fighting men take as an everyday matter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Bombardment of a V.A.D. Hospital

HAPPILY it has only once occurred, so far, that a Hospital in England has been under German fire; but it is interesting to remember the stirring story of that event and to know that it was a V.A.D. Auxiliary Hospital which underwent this trying experience.

Nobody will ever forget the effect made on the minds of everyone in Great Britain when the news came out that three of our *undefended* East Coast towns had been bombarded by German ships. Scarborough, Whitby and West Hartlepool were the first English towns to know what it meant to have German shrapnel and high explosive shells falling in their midst.

It happened early in the morning of December 16th, 1914, and the story was simply but poignantly told to me by the Commandant of the St. John Hospital which actually had a piece of shell hurled through it.

The Hospital had been established in the Masonic hall in West Hartlepool, the hall being situated quite a mile and a half inland. The main hall had been turned into the chief ward, and at

the time of the bombardment there were only patients in this ward, the beds upstairs being empty. The Hospital was in charge of a doctor who was also an old St. John Ambulance Brigade worker, and his wife, who was a fully trained nurse, and acted as Commandant. They slept away from the Hospital, leaving a fully trained Sister in charge at night.

The bombardment began a few minutes before eight o'clock in the morning, and as it happened, the Sister in charge had just run across the road to her bed-room to get something she required, having left a senior V.A.D. member in charge.

The first whizz of a shell coming over the Hospital startled the V.A.D. nurse, but she made no comment and quietly went and looked out of the front door and saw for herself what was happening. The noise of the shells was tremendous, for the Germans seemed to have poured them into the town at a quick rate. The St. John member went back to the ward and ordered all the men, who were luckily more or less convalescent, to get up. There was one empty bed in the ward. Before the men had time to get out of bed a portion of shrapnel came hurtling through one of the windows and fell in the middle of that one empty bed!

Still there was no panic. The men scrambled into their clothes and were collected into the hall of the building, as that was the centre, and the V.A.D. member judged it to be the safest place.

She guessed that the gas would be turned off and she knew that they would be requiring large quantities of boiling water before long, so she quietly set the orderlies to making big fires in every room, and putting kettles on to boil. Of course by this time the Sister in charge had run back and did valuable service in preparing for the stream of wounded which began to arrive at the doors.

Meanwhile, the doctor and his wife had shown themselves to be truly heroic and splendidly patriotic by setting forth immediately to go to the Hospital. They left their little children in the house in the charge of an aunt, and went through the shell-strewn streets, taking their lives in their hands.

"It must have been hard for you to leave the children," I said to the mother.

"Yes, it was, because one never knew whether a shell would not strike the house at any moment; but of course it was our simple duty to come to the Hospital. No one could have done anything else."

It is just these "simple duties" which mean everything to a country at war. It never occurred to either the doctor or his wife that they were doing anything brave or splendid. They were in charge of the Hospital, and directly it was menaced their place was in it, no matter what their private feelings might be.

All that morning wounded men, women, and children were being brought into the Hospital, some of them dying, and many of them maimed for life. One woman, whose finger I saw being dressed whilst I was there, told me that she had been sitting in her kitchen with her baby on her lap when a shell tore through the roof and buried itself away in the ground beneath her. As it passed, a piece of shrapnel took her little finger off, but the baby was untouched.

The wreckage caused by the bombardment in West Hartlepool was indescribable, and the stories of ruined homes and maimed little children are too horrible for repetition. The authorities of the town let the gas off directly the bombardment began, and it was a mercy that they had done so, since a bomb fell quite close to the gas works.

The Germans would have other nations believe that these three towns were fortified, just as they try to justify themselves when they sink unarmed and neutral ships, and when they perpetrate all sorts of atrocities on women and children in the countries which they have overrun; but there will come a day of reckoning when the whole world will know the truth, and will know that these three coast towns were no more defended than are our Hospital ships used for combative purposes.

*A Look Round the North.*

Now that we have come up so far North, (and my readers have had a far better journey than I had, for I happened to travel at a moment when the whole of the railway traffic was upset,) we may as well have a look round at the wonderful work which Voluntary Aid Detachments have accomplished in Northumberland and Durham.

Here, as in all the other districts of England, a County Director has been appointed, who acts equally for the British Red Cross and the St. John Ambulance. This arrangement has worked admirably, and it is remarkable how unbiassed these County Directors have shown themselves to be, although in every case they had originally belonged to one or other of the organisations.

A very large number of V.A.D. men had gone from this part of the world into the various medical branches of the Army and Navy; but at the end of December, 1915, there were still a great many male V.A.D. members who were miners, munition workers, or engaged in other "starred" employments.

The very first work that fell to the share of the Voluntary Aid Detachments in Newcastle was to establish a Rest Station at the Central Railway Station, to attend to soldiers passing through Newcastle, or to those in the town who became ill. Gradually Hospitals were established throughout

the district, some of them being especially detailed for the work of attending to the sick amongst the troops stationed in the neighbourhood. Other Hospitals relieved the congestion at the great Military Hospital, and there is one Detention Hospital which is largely staffed by members of a female V.A.D., and although not classed as a V.A.D. Hospital, has been carried on by this Detachment ever since in conjunction with successive Field Ambulance Units.

*At the Rest Station, Newcastle.*

Members of the Nursing Divisions of the St. John Ambulance Brigade provided this Rest Station in one of the waiting rooms, a continuous service of members being on duty night and day. These members also meet Hospital trains passing through Newcastle and serve tea, coffee, cigarettes and sandwiches to the men.

There are sixteen V.A.D. Hospitals in Northumberland alone, and many of these are in historic houses which have been loaned by their owners for this purpose. Haggerston Castle, Beal, is a very fine place for a Hospital, whilst another very beautiful house, Holeyn Hall, Wylam-on-Tyne, accommodates fifty beds.

It is invidious to say anything about special Hospitals when the general standard is such a high one. As a matter of fact, the very first Hospital to be opened in this district was the one at

West Hartlepool, and the Military Commandant of the town told me personally that he did not know what they would have done without it in those first early months of the war when no military medical arrangements had been made. Shortly afterwards Whinney House was established at Gateshead, and is the largest Voluntary Aid Hospital of the North, and one of the largest in the whole of England.

*Transport.*

The entire work of the transport of patients from Hospital trains to Hospital has been carried out by members of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, the whole work being put under a District Transport Officer.

*Hospitals in Durham.*

In the county of Durham nine Hospitals were opened up to the end of 1914, three of these being for local troops. In a year's time the Hospitals had increased to twenty-four, and since then a good many others have been added.

One of the most historic of these Hospitals is that which has been established in Brancepeth Castle. It has 106 beds in it. The great rooms, still decorated with fine old armour, make magnificent wards.

Windlestone Hall, Ferryhill, is another of the very fine Durham Hospitals.

During the several air raids which the northern towns have suffered, much good work has been rendered by V.A.D. members. One Detachment has been specially assigned to this duty in connection with the Coast Defence Scheme. They are always on the alert, and ready to cope with any emergency that may arise.

*Depot for Duty-Free Goods for Hospitals.*

By consent of the Custom House authorities in London, the County Director was allowed to open a depot for duty-free goods for all the Military Hospitals in the North of England. A great deal of admirable work has been done at this depot, huge gifts of tea, tobacco and cigarettes having passed out of bond through the depot to the Hospitals.

*A Commandant versus a Trained Sister.*

In the report of the work of the British Red Cross Society and the St. John Ambulance Brigade in the northern part of England there is a note about the difficulty which has been experienced in some places of assigning the exact duties of the Commandant and the trained Sister. It is so wisely put that I think I cannot do better than quote it, and as the report says, if this division of work were entirely understood, no difficulty would arise in connection with the respective duties of the Commandant and the trained Sister.

The Commandant "is responsible to the County Director for the administration, discipline and maintenance of the Hospital, and for the provision of the necessary V.A.D. staff. The trained nurse acting in the capacity of Lady Superintendent, Matron, or Sister-in-charge, is responsible for the wards and the nursing duties connected with the Hospital, and to arrange all the work of the Probationers who are under her. She is responsible to the Medical Officer of the Hospital for her patients."

*The Staffing of a Military Hospital.*

It is interesting to note that the first notable example of the complete staffing of a Military Hospital occurred at the Northumberland War Hospital, Gosforth, when a contingent from No. 6 district, consisting of one sergeant-major, ten sergeants, eleven corporals, and a hundred and twenty-nine privates, was sent to staff this Hospital.

*Losses by Death.*

This district has suffered terribly by losing members through death. Their men have been killed in the Dardanelles, in France and in Alexandria; whilst others have died in Hospital in the East and in Malta. They have lost a good many members of the women's V.A.D. also by death.

*War Honours.*

But on the other hand the district has been cheered by several of its members having received special war honours. One man has won the Cross of the Russian Order of St. George; another the French Croix de Guerre for services in the Vosges with a motor ambulance; a Nursing Sister has had presented to her the Gold Medal of the Montenegrin Red Cross by the Queen of Montenegro, and the Gold Medal of the Order of Danilo by the King of Montenegro; whilst two men have earned the D.C.M. and the D.S.M. respectively.

Probably by the time these words are in print these honours will have been added to; but it is good to know that the men and women members of the V.A.D.'s from all over the kingdom—nay, from all over the Empire—are earning not only war medals which they can wear upon their breasts, but something that is higher and deeper and greater—the love and the respect of those amongst whom they labour.

## CHAPTER IX

### V.A.D. Work in the South

FOR travellers such as ourselves, who do not have to wait for trains, and certainly can surpass aeroplanes in the matter of rapidity, it is nothing for us to fly from the North to the South in order to get a peep at V.A.D. work there.

For a moment we will pass over the "little village of London," as our Canadian cousins are fond of calling it, and fly on to the beautiful land of Devon, which we will take as a typical example of what is going on all along the southern coast of England.

It was in the year 1909, when the Voluntary Aid movement was in its infancy, that the people of Devon took it up enthusiastically, and raised many Detachments in the towns round about. There were many difficulties and differences, and much ignorance and even hostility had to be overcome, we are told, before the V.A. organisation acquired vitality and prominence; but the County grappled with these difficulties, and worked out a scheme of V.A. organisation on its own lines,

the guiding principle being the necessity for forming the Detachments into a definitely organised force. County headquarters were established, and from there absolute control was kept over all the units.

The Commandants of the various Detachments were not satisfied with the bare bones, as it were, of First Aid and Home Nursing being learned by their members. They insisted that they should get real Hospital training, and advanced courses of instruction were given, with frequent field days and competitions, the diligent preparation and equipment of buildings for use as Hospitals, and the seizing of all possible opportunities for taking practical training in Hospitals. There is no doubt that this early training has left a very definite mark upon the war work which has been accomplished by these V.A. Detachments. This is a very important point to be remembered by all who are interested in the history of the Voluntary Aid movement.

It must be confessed that the standard of the Detachments all over the Kingdom was not an equal one. People were too apt to think that war was a chimera which would never materialize, and that members belonging to V.A. Detachments were simply amusing themselves by playing at something which never would be brought into practical use.

It is true that the War Office very wisely in-

sisted on holding an annual inspection of every registered Detachment, and for the moment this brought the members up to a state of efficiency; but the truth remains that real, keen enthusiasm for the work seems to have run in "veins," as it were, throughout the country, and there is no doubt but that the county of Devon may be properly proud of having been one of the richest "veins" which existed in England before the war broke out.

The preparations before the war were so well thought out that few changes of any kind had to be made. Some months before the outbreak of war a test mobilization was held on a large scale in order to see exactly what would happen in the unlikely event of England being invaded. The plans which were utilised that day have required little or no modification for the war work which has been carried on, though happily it has not been in the nature of dealing with the invasion of our island. Enough women had qualified as V.A.D. nurses before the war to staff the present twenty-one Hospitals which exist in Devon (at the time of writing) exclusive of the work in Plymouth.

*Two Objects.*

They realised in Devon a point which was overlooked by a good many Voluntary Aid Detachments. They knew that the object of V.A.D. work

St. John litter, which will take either the St. John or the army stretchers.

Undercarriage packed for transport.

was twofold: first the tending of wounded and sick men from the Front, and secondly, the tending of garrison troops in the neighbourhood.

*Men Direct from Hospital Ships.*

The report from Devon tells us that the Hospitals of Exeter, Newton Abbot and Torquay take cases direct from the Hospital ships at Southampton, and are in this respect almost unique among the V.A.D. Hospitals in England.

*Catering for Hospitals.*

They work the catering for Hospitals in this district on a general system with admirable results. An office has been set apart for the special work of catering for all the extra Hospitals and for providing food for the Rest Stations. It has answered admirably both from the economical point of view and from having good food supplied to each Hospital without any trouble to the individual Commandants.

*Quick Work.*

Devon has not been behind in supplying some instance of exceptionally quick work.

At one of the Hospitals a telegram was received at nine o'clock on a Sunday morning that forty-five patients would be sent from Southampton in the course of the day. No patients had been previously received, nor had the staff been sum-

moned. By 4.30 P.M., forty-nine patients had been put to bed and treatment begun!

Another Hospital was mobilised at forty-eight hours' notice to deal with a prevailing epidemic of influenza.

A building which had been used as a store, and was quite unsuitable as a Hospital as it was then, was converted in forty-eight hours.

*West of England Eye Infirmary.*

Notice of mobilisation of this Hospital was received at mid-day on Sunday, October 4th, 1914. The Hospital was equipped and ready for receiving patients by mid-day on Monday, October 5th.

At Exeter on a Sunday in October, 1914, a telephone message was received, saying that the Hospital must be opened immediately for the reception of sick from the local garrison. On the following Monday a Hospital with sixty beds, fully equipped, was ready, and patients were received during the day. This building had been previously earmarked and all the necessary equipment was ready, but at the actual time of the telephone message arriving it was still a Children's Home under the Local Government Board. The local officers were extremely prompt in their removal of the children, and in less than twelve hours the building was handed over to the V.A.D. staff.

In the following February there was a severe

outbreak of bronchial pneumonia in some barracks, and a very serious state of affairs was created because of the lack of Hospital accommodation. A building in the Barrack Square, which had been originally a Quartermaster's store and had not been used at all for about twenty-five years, was offered to the V.A. organisation for the purpose of a Hospital. In less than forty-eight hours it was fully equipped and staffed, and patients were being admitted. This was a case when no sort of previous warning had been given that such a thing could possibly be requested. The building was exceedingly dirty, and it had to be cleaned by the V.A. staff before any sort of equipment could be put into it.

To add to the worries of the V.A. authorities, it was during the work of getting this Hospital ready that a convoy of a hundred cases had arrived direct from overseas, and had to be transported to Hospitals in Exeter. Troubles never come alone, and it was really enough to cause some sort of excitement when they heard, in addition, that some cases of measles had developed in one of the Hospitals and must be isolated. The Administrator says with charming modesty, "I think perhaps, therefore, that these particular two days were as full of incident for V.A. workers in Exeter as any we have ever had."

Here again, the joining of the two great Societies has worked smoothly and well. The Head-

quarters is staffed by V.A. members trained from both Societies. It seems that this staff carries out a work which is usually done by the Central Military Hospital of a district and not by the Voluntary Aid organisation at all, and it is charming indeed to hear from one of the chief authorities in Devon that "there never was at any time friction between the two organisations."

*Transport.*

At Torquay the whole of the transport for the Red Cross Hospitals is done by St. John men, whilst in Exeter the transport is done by British Red Cross and St. John men combined. Several St. John members are serving in British Red Cross Hospitals. The Administrator of the Headquarters Staff, a military office appointed by the Military authorities, is rightly proud of being able to say, "so that you see we are quite impartial, as personally I think all Voluntary Aid organisations should be."

*Two Hours' Notice.*

The St. John Hospital at Newton Abbot received a sudden message that forty cases were coming direct to them from overseas, and would be with them in two hours' time. The Hospital was not open to patients, but the staff turned to, and within two hours forty beds were ready for the men.

This is the kind of thing that has been happening in V.A.D. Hospitals in every part of the country, and in every case the V.A.D. staff has risen to the occasion and accomplished what apparently looked like the impossible.

## CHAPTER X

### Some of the Work in London

TO attempt to give any sort of adequate description of the V.A.D. work that has gone on in London ever since the war began would be ridiculous, for it would need a volume to itself. Therefore I must beg for leniency, and hope that my readers will take each incident which I mention and multiply it by a hundred at least, and then they may arrive at some sort of correct result.

On that terrible August Bank Holiday before war was actually declared, many members of the St. John Ambulance Brigade were out on duty on the open spaces around London, and some of them occupied their spare time between attending to accidents by writing postcards to men belonging to Detachments telling them where the Military and Naval authorities wished them to report themselves on the following day.

It was wonderful how promptly the men turned out, leaving their work and their homes in order to go to the help of their country. The women members were not behindhand. Dozens of them were employed during that first week of the war

in making tourniquets for the equipment of Military or Naval Medical Units.

The historic St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, breathing history from its beautiful old rooms, became a beehive of earnest workers, which was only equalled for activity by the Headquarters of the British Red Cross Society.

*Belgian Refugees.*

One of the first London Detachments to get to work was one belonging to the British Red Cross Society. It had offered to it a very large warehouse close to Victoria Station. It was a huge job to clean it down, but the members of the Detachment made short work of it, and in an incredible space of time the many floors of the great building were turned into dormitories filled with beds.

Hundreds of hungry, weary, half-clothed Belgian refugees were taken into this house day by day and given food and rest.

It was a good piece of work that was done on the spur of an emergency, but very soon the Detachment turned its mind and its capacity to work more in the nature of that for which it had been formed. People not skilled in nursing could deal with the "Belgian" problem, and they came forward nobly, gradually releasing members of Detachments who could be of real use in Hospital work.

*Hospital for Officers.*

One of the first V.A.D. Hospitals for officers was opened in the beautiful house in Cadogan Gardens, which was most kindly lent by Viscountess Mountgarret. A St. John Detachment ran the Hospital, with a certain number of fully trained Sisters to take charge of the nursing.

Since then so many of the most beautiful houses in London have been given up as Hospitals that it is impossible to mention them by name. Such historic houses as Londonderry House, Dorchester House, and quite recently Grosvenor House, have been given over for the use of our wounded men; and wherever they are you may be certain that you will meet members of a V.A. Detachment.

An Army Matron of an Officers' Hospital not a stone's throw from Park Lane told me that she had been amazed at the capability shown by her V.A.D. nurses. She said, "I am a strict disciplinarian, and I believe in pouncing on them if they do not do their work well, but I must say they are extraordinarily good, as a rule. Some of the senior ones, who had had a certain amount of training before the war and have since worked regularly in Hospital, are quite equal to any regular Hospital staff nurse. I watch each one closely before I allow her to have any responsibility; but I have found many of them capable,

extraordinarily conscientious, and all-round good workers.''

*The White City as a Hospital.*

Who amongst those of us who remember the White City as nothing but a place of entertainment and amusement could ever have imagined that a portion of it would become a Hospital? In turn the great buildings of the erstwhile exhibition have served for many purposes since the war began; but one of the earliest was the sheltering of sick recruits.

Many civilians seem to overlook the fact that in creating a huge Army as we have done during this war, the Military authorities have not only to think of the wounded and sick from the Front, but must establish Hospitals for the reception of men who become ill whilst on home duty.

It was for the recruits billeted in the White City that the Hospital there was needed, and for many months it did magnificent work. It fell to the happy lot of a British Red Cross Detachment to start the work. Let the Commandant of the Detachment tell the story of that work:

On October 18th, 1914, we were told that in three days' time we should be required to open a sixteen bed Hospital in the Royal Pavilion, as some thousands of troops were to be accommodated in the White City at once.

We spent from that date to the morning of the 21st in collecting from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood who had already promised us help, should the necessity arise, the equipment for the Hospital. Everything was plainly marked and entered in books by our Quartermaster as either a gift or a loan, and what was lacking was supplemented out of the funds of the Society.

At two o'clock on the 21st, we were given possession of the Pavilion in a quite incomplete form. Work was still going on at the drains, the lighting, the heating, and the gas-stoves in the kitchen. Our staff of twenty got to work at once, and by four o'clock we had everything in readiness, and as the troops were already coming in, accidents might happen at any moment.

By six o'clock, one ward of eight beds was fully equipped in every way; and by ten o'clock next morning both wards, the day-room with all its stores, and the kitchen were in full working order, and patients had already begun to arrive.

At the end of the first fortnight it was realised that the accommodation was quite inadequate, and another pavilion was handed over to us in which we placed sixteen beds. This was opened at once, and we found it was necessary to shut a portion of it off to make a small isolation ward. Naturally, the moment a case was known to be infectious it was removed.

At the end of the first month we handed over

the Hospital complete to a St. John Detachment, who ran it for a month and then handed it back to us.

In the following January it was again found imperative to enlarge, so a corner of the Officers' Mess was given over to us to make yet another ward of nine beds.

At the beginning of February an epidemic of measles made it necessary for us to equip a large empty pavilion in the neighbourhood, but it was run by a trained nurse and two orderlies, we only being responsible for supervision, laundry and food.

We also had a very large Out-Patient department, where during the six months we treated some thousands of patients, exclusive of all inoculations which took place there. We supplied our own dispensary.

Our staff consisted of myself, as Commandant in charge,

1 Lady Superintendent,
1 Matron,
1 Quartermaster,
5 cooks,
1 dispenser,
1 trained nurse for night duty,
2 V.A.D. nurses for night duty,
9 V.A.D. nurses for general nursing duty,
1 clerk.

The work was exceedingly heavy, as there was

such a constant changing of patients. Much of our equipment was improvised; all our stores, pack stores, cupboards, etc., consisting of sugar boxes built up, lined with glazed calico, and curtained off. We did all our own upholstery work, and put up our own shelves, etc. Our cooks were constantly complimented upon their cooking.

When the time came for the Hospital to be closed we had very little notice, and we cleared everything up in three days, returning all stores to the Divisional store, packed for the most part in the sugar cases which had served as cupboards.

Since the troops left the White City it has been used for many other Government purposes, and there is a permanent Ambulance Station there where an old St. John Sergeant is in charge, together with a trained nurse and a junior nurse.

The modest, bare report of the work thus given by the Commandant must be embroidered, as it were, by the reader. We can fill in for ourselves with but little effort some rough idea of the work that this undertaking meant to that little band of V.A.D. members.

The White City lies, as everyone knows, on the outskirts of London. It is not an easy place to get at, and the Detachment which had the work in hand came from one of the fashionable suburbs some miles away. Many of these members must

have had quite a long journey to get to their work in the morning and back again at night.

It happened that it was during the winter, and bitter weather prevailed a great part of the time. Exhibition buildings are not the warmest of places, (except those which were fitted up as wards,) and there was of necessity a good deal of running between one building and another. Yet these devoted women took no credit to themselves, but just went straight ahead with the work in hand and accomplished it so well that they had high commendation for it from the Military authorities.

*Work at the 3d London General Hospital.*

In the early autumn of 1915, this same Detachment was detailed for work at the 3d London General Hospital, one of the biggest Military Hospitals in the Metropolis. It is situated on a large, open common and is magnificently equipped.

More men had been wanted for the fighting forces or for Ambulance work on the field, and a great many orderlies in the Military Hospitals had been withdrawn for these purposes. Women in all grades of life had volunteered to undertake men's work, and women members of V.A. Detachments were determined to try to fill the vacancies caused by men orderlies being taken away. It was an experiment, but one that has proved most successful, not only in London but in France.

Eleven of the Detachment which had worked in the White City, including the Commandant, and three members from other Detachments went to the 3d London General Hospital for a month, and they did so well that at the end of that time many other Hospitals adopted the same idea.

The Commandant says, "We worked in the Admission and Discharge office, the Stewards' Store, the linen store, the telephone-call office, the post-office, the main hall pay office, and we did the typewriting and secretarial work of the Hospital. At the end of the first month there were thirty-four members at work there in the places of men who had gone abroad on service.

"From there last March seven of us were detailed for France, and we are now working in the wards, the kitchens and the offices of a Hospital there, whilst I have charge of the Sisters' Mess."

The Commandant adds that she cannot say enough for the loyalty and devotion that her members have shown since the beginning of the war. It is nice to hear a superior officer say that, but one has not much doubt of what the members would say about her. It is the old saying over again—"a good officer makes good men."

It always interested me immensely to watch the methods of officers with their men on the troop trains as they went up to the Front. I came to the conclusion that the officer who could not get obedience from his men, or complained of their

behaviour, was not the right man for his work.

It is exactly the same thing in V.A.D. work. Almost invariably it lies in the hands of the Commandant of each Unit to make or to mar the work of the members. He or she can impart enthusiasm, loyalty, devotion to duty, to an extraordinary degree by first setting a high example, and secondly by attaching the members to himself or herself by the cords of personal affection and respect.

Commandants who do not insist on discipline and on being properly treated will never make their members as efficient in their work as they should be. The member who respects himself or herself will take a pride in saying "Sir" to the Medical Officer and to all superiors whilst on duty. They will rise when a superior enters the room, and they will learn to keep their tempers whatsoever the provocation may be. V.A.D. members are, in fact, a kind of extra arm to the Army, and should be glad to accept military discipline as a part of their training.

The speech of a very raw V.A.D., who said, "I do not see that there is any need for some people to be seniors and some people to be juniors, because we are all grown-up women," showed herself not only lacking in common-sense but also unfitted for the work. Seniority and rank there must be in every big organisation, and it is generally a

case of the "survival of the fittest." The man or the woman who has taken the greatest trouble to learn the work almost invariably climbs the ladder to the higher places, and therefore has a right to be obeyed by those who have taken less trouble to equip themselves.

There are still a few people who consider it is *infra dig* to bow to discipline, but as a matter of fact it is just the other way about, for no person can rule who cannot obey, and in honouring their superiors they are honouring themselves.

The vast majority of V.A. Detachments have excellent discipline, and I would not like them as a whole to think that I am venturing to criticise them; but this seems to be an opportunity for saying just a word to any of those who may not have thought out the thing carefully, and who imagine that because V.A.D. members are voluntary and give valuable time and services without any thought of reward, they should not be asked to submit themselves to strict control.

There is a fascination about seeing a well-disciplined V.A. Detachment where they have learned to march well, to stand at attention when spoken to by a superior, to reply briskly and briefly, and to pay respect to the smallest detail that has been ordered by an officer; above all it is good to see them draw themselves up sharply to attention when the National Anthem is played, and to

Motor launch sent to Mesopotamia for carrying wounded on the Tigris. Presented to the St. John Ambulance Association by a friend.

stand with head erect and steady eyes until the last note has died away.

These things seem to come naturally to men, so that the male Detachments are almost invariably excellent in all these ways; but just here and there one comes across a women's Detachment which has not yet learned the inestimable value of strict discipline.

After having travelled thousands of miles in order to see V.A.D. work, there are certain pictures left in my mind, and none are more vivid or more pleasant than those which recall the smart appearance of dozens of Detachments throughout the country where the members take a pride, not only in themselves and their conduct, but in their Detachment, which is to them a corporate body, in which the standard must be the highest.

Discipline is no chimera or fantasy. Its effects permeate the whole work of the Detachment, and many a hasty word that has risen to the lips of a V.A.D. member, and has been checked simply because she has been taught not to give way to her feelings, has prevented an uncomfortable scene in a Hospital ward. The good old Army rule of obey first and complain afterwards should become one of the mottoes of all V.A.D. members.

*Artists as Orderlies.*

The Colonel of a Military Hospital in London did not know where to turn to get orderlies, but

one day he had a bright idea, and that very evening obtained an introduction to a certain artists' club in Chelsea.

He spoke to the members, telling them of the needs of the Hospital, and showed them how much they owed to the wounded men. Several of the members were over military age, or for other reasons had not felt able to enlist; but before the Colonel left the club that evening he had quite a long list of artists who had promised to enter the ranks the next day as R.A.M.C. orderlies. They kept their word and have done magnificent service, the majority of them being very well known in the world of art.

Of course they knew nothing about Hospital work, and it was highly amusing to hear one of them describe his experiences during the first weeks of work. He shaved off his beard of course, and was quite unrecognisable to his friends in his Tommy's uniform.

Many of these men had never done a labourious day's work in their lives, and one of them had to be actually taught how to scrub by a ward Sister; but against their ignorance of Hospital routine one can put their education and their anxiety to learn, and within a very few weeks they had fallen into the work as to the manner born.

They do the ward work, the kitchen work, the garden work; they go out on the convoys, and they take long journeys in charge of patients who have

to be escorted to Hospitals far away, and they have shown themselves to be *men* in the highest sense of the word. But the exceedingly clever little Hospital Magazine, which is issued monthly, proves that they have not forgotten how to wield pen and brush, for between its pages one finds some little gems of art, executed by Private This or Corporal That in his spare time.

The war has turned the world topsy-turvy. Who would have expected to find an A.R.A. or a R.B.A. setting up beds in a hut ward or undertaking the thousand and one odd jobs which fall to the lot of a Hospital orderly?

## CHAPTER XI

### Air Raid and Other Duties

ALTHOUGH happily the damage done by Zeppelin bombs has been slight in comparison with the effort made by the Germans, very full arrangements have had to be made to cope with any possible emergency. Great credit is due to the V.A.D. members, men and women, who undertake to be always ready to attend to accidents during an air raid. It is not an exhilarating affair to be called out at eleven o'clock at night perhaps, to have to walk a mile or two to a central position, and to sit in a spot which is often not too warm, until the small hours of the morning, when the walk home has to be made through the pitch-dark streets.

On more than one occasion an exceedingly well-known woman of position, who has undertaken this duty as a V.A.D. member, has stopped at a coffee stall, and has been thankful to buy a hot drink to cheer her on her homeward way. I think the keeper of the coffee stall would have been a little surprised if he had known the identity of his customer, but it is only a typical case of dozens of others, for many highly cultured men and

women, holding important positions during the day, have offered themselves for this particular night duty, because they can do that without interfering with their regular daily work, which in many cases is of supreme importance to the nation.

The arrangements made, under the police, by each great city for calling up help in the event of air raids are extraordinarily complete. Usually, the authorities know a few hours before a Zeppelin is likely to attack a city, and a carefully worded warning is sent forth to all the Ambulance people who must go on duty. They know exactly where they are to go, and most of them have "Zeppelin bags," as they call them, packed ready with every kind of dressing, and with gas masks, which they can pick up and take with them at a moment's notice.

I was delighted to see such a bag was hung on a special peg in the hall of a house of a V.A.D. member in one of the great Midland cities; she explained laughingly, "I always put my clothes ready so that I can get into them very quickly, and then as I fly out at the front door I pick up my Zeppelin bag, and am ready for anything that may happen."

*Some Sad Cases.*

If the Huns can find any satisfaction in knowing that they are killing old men and women, and little children, let them read the following story:

In a certain suburb outside London, which has rows and rows of little houses occupied almost entirely by the poorer working classes, there lived an old couple who had worked all the days of their lives, and were eking out their narrow means as best they could, for they were both feeble and long past work.

A bomb fell on the house and set it on fire, and these two inoffensive old people were burned to death before they could be rescued. The place burned like a match-box, and although the Ambulance men and the firemen made some gallant attempts to get up the ladders to the window of the bedroom, they were beaten back by the flames.

One of the V.A.D. men who was on the scene described it bluntly, and without the least thought that he had played the part of a hero. After he had tried to get up the ladder to the old couple, he turned his attention to a mother and daughter who had been seriously hurt about the face and head.

A little later on, a man rushed into the Police Station and announced that he was the caretaker of a certain Mission Hall, and that a bomb had come through the roof but had not exploded. He begged that somebody should go over and take it away, and of course it fell to the lot of an Ambulance man to do this. He was perfectly calm about it, and even joked over it. He went in,

picked the bomb up, and carried it away in his hand to a place of safety.

A pathetic incident happened in connection with one of the air raids. A man who had been devoted to St. John Ambulance work for a great many years, and had undertaken air raid duty many times, was taken seriously ill, and actually died at the moment when the police arrived at his house to tell him to go on duty. It was quite appropriate that it should happen, in a sense, because he was a man who had always put duty first; and certainly nothing but very serious illness would have prevented him from going out to the succour of his fellow-beings.

He was a workingman, who had given up every one of his Bank Holidays for nearly twenty years past to go on to one of the great open spaces in London to attend to the accidents which always occur on these holidays. He was a big, large-hearted, cheery man, from whom one never heard a grumble or a disagreeable word however hot the day or arduous the work.

It has been my privilege to work with him on a great many occasions, and it always touched me deeply to see him attending to the children, for he had the smile and the winning ways that instantly comfort the little ones when they come to grief.

When I heard about his sudden death, and how the police had wanted his aid at that very moment, it seemed to me absolutely typical of the man, and

he in his turn is typical of hundreds of members of V.A. Detachments.

The man who tries to mount the ladder set against a burning house, or rides down the high-road with shrapnel falling about him, is surely as much a hero as he who gives succour to the wounded on the battle-field.

*How the Members Are Called to Duty.*

Perhaps it would be interesting to show exactly how the members are called up for "air raid duty." We will take, for instance, an outlying district of London, where there is a permanent Ambulance Station open day and night for any accident which may occur on the busy thoroughfares near-by.

To the men on duty there at night the news of an air raid comes from the Fire Brigade Headquarters. The Ambulance man on duty immediately rings up six or seven cyclists who live near, and within a few minutes they arrive and take away little packets of cards which are ready prepared for them. On the cards is written the name of the station to which the Ambulance man is to go.

The cyclist runs round, knocks at the door of each Ambulance man, and pushes the card into the letter-box, so that when the man comes down he takes the card and sees exactly where he is to be stationed. This method saves the time of the

cyclist, who does not have to wait to deliver a message.

The public library in this district has been turned into an emergency Hospital with twenty-six beds, and altogether there are a hundred beds available in the neighbourhood; whilst there are nine regular stations in the district where men and nurses are on duty.

In the event of a fire, two Ambulance officers always go with the motor engine, carrying First Aid equipment with them; and following quickly upon their heels there goes an emergency gang of men, carrying picks and shovels to effect rescues if necessary.

The duty of Ambulance men and women on the East Coast of England has been arduous in the extreme, for they have never been able to relax for one moment from the chance of having to attend to victims of air raids or bombardment.

At all the towns on the East Coast there is an understanding between the authorities and the members of the Detachments as to the post they are to occupy directly they are called up. They turn out with their equipment and form dressing stations, and provide temporary Hospitals for the civilian population.

In addition to this work, they meet all trains and convoys of wounded, and help to unload them and transport them to the various Hospitals to which they are allotted.

*V.A.D. Roll of Honour.*

As the years of war increase, so our Roll of Honour lengthens. It is quite impossible to give a complete list of the V.A.D. men and women who have given their lives in the course of performing their duty; but I should like to touch upon a few cases, in order to show the general public something of the sacrifices that are being made, not once or twice, but constantly, in the ranks of V.A.D. workers.

It will be remembered that very early in the war a Hospital ship went down, and a number of R.A.M.C. men were lost. Practically the whole of those men were Red Cross Volunteers.

Then we lost men during the sinking of H.M.S. Cressy; whilst there have been only too many Red Cross members and V.A.D. men and women who have contracted dysentery or typhoid abroad, and have died.

One St. John man, who was employed in one of H. M. Dockyards, was instructed to join a ship, which foundered four days after his mobilisation. Of him, his superior officer writes, "I always found him a most efficient and painstaking officer, and I know his death was heard of with great regret in this neighbourhood."

In August, 1916, it will be remembered that a troop ship was torpedoed on her way from Alexandria to the Dardanelles. When she foundered

1,000 lives were lost and 600 saved. One Unit of the R.A.M.C., which was going out as a Casualty Clearing Station and was almost entirely made up of men from one part of England, was very hard hit. It lost two officers and fifty-five men out of a strength of eight officers and seventy-seven men.

The officer in charge in England writes thus: "This fine Unit, which was thoroughly well organized and equipped, was principally composed of trained members from the St. John Ambulance Brigade in . . . Amongst those lost were a sergeant and five privates from the . . . Division, all well-known Ambulance men and highly thought of in civil life, so much so that a memorial service was held in the town on receipt of the sad news."

*Quick Work.*

One might easily fill a book with stories of quick work accomplished by members of V.A. Detachments; but I will give a few instances just to show the kind of thing that is happening every day amongst the members.

Suddenly six men were wanted as stretcher-bearers for France. The authorities telephoned through to one of the Red Cross centres in London, and the officer there, knowing that a drill was taking place in Regent's Park, sent a messenger off in a taxi with the very simple object of taking six men away from the drill and sending them

across to France. This was done, and in the space of one hour from the moment that the telephone call was received the men presented themselves for duty, and crossed the Channel that same evening. A V.A.D. member must, indeed, be ready to go anywhere and do anything at a moment's notice.

Another time a telephone call came to a Red Cross office from a Hospital, saying that one of the patients had become seriously delirious and must have a special attendant. The staff of the Hospital was already overworked, and they wanted a man sent down immediately. Within half an hour from the time the telephone call came in a Red Cross member was by the bed of the delirious man.

In the very early days of the war a party of Red Cross orderlies was sent to one of the big French towns. It was during the terrible retreat from Mons, and fearing that possibly the Germans would get into the town, the French people had blown up the bridges all round. It was necessary for the orderlies to get into the town, and so they improvised a bridge of planks and crawled across the river with imminent peril to their lives.

Members of Red Cross Units have worked in Hospitals in Italy, in Petrograd, in Salonica, Malta, Cairo, Servia, Luxor, Alexandria, Montenegro, Palermo, Corfu, and in many other foreign countries.

When there was a sudden and serious outbreak of typhoid amongst the French patients in a certain French town, there came an urgent appeal for ten V.A.D. Englishwomen to nurse them. In a couple of days that little band of nurses was hard at work amongst the typhoid patients in a town situated in the heart of France.

Some of the noblest work, because of its lowly character, is done by V.A.D. men and women, who are at strenuous work all day, but give up a part of their nights to go into Hospitals for the purpose of cleaning utensils which have to be kept bright. The overworked staff of a Hospital very often finds that it is the "last straw" to have to keep all the pots and pans and the brass fittings as bright as they should be kept in a well-managed Hospital.

It occurred to some V.A. members, who could not possibly give time in the day, that this particular kind of work could be quite easily done at night, far away in the kitchens whilst the patients were asleep; and in hundreds of cases men and women have given up a portion of their night's rest in order to go and do this lowly task.

On the same high level there comes the work of two girls who earn their own living in a West End shop. They have to be at the counter at 8.45, and since they live in a northern suburb of London, they have to spend a good bit of time in the daily journey. They discovered that a West

End Hospital was greatly in need of help in the early morning hours, and they offered to go and cook the breakfasts for the patients and the staff.

They rose at five o'clock every morning and went direct to the Hospital, where they showed themselves to be excellent cooks and steady workers. By eight o'clock they had been able to tidy up after the meal was finished, and they then went on to their work. This wonderful bit of "duty" is still going on, and is only an example of what many women are doing in different districts.

*Pillows for the Wounded.*

There came a requisition suddenly to the St. John warehouse that a large number of pillows should be sent down to Charing Cross Station to go off by a certain train. Suitable pillows had to be sorted out and packed, but well within the hour a messenger arrived at Charing Cross with the pillows and put them on the train.

*Turning a Convent School into a Hospital.*

A fine piece of rapid work was carried through by a Sussex British Red Cross Detachment. Part of a girls' Convent School had been offered as a Hospital, and on a certain Saturday evening in the early months of the war a call came from the Military authorities for accommodation for some thirty or forty wounded.

The Commandant of the Detachment called to-

gether her members, and they all set to work. The children who were at school in the Convent were put into one-half of the building, which was divided off by boards; but in their half were the kitchen and many of the necessary offices.

Thus it came about that the V.A. members had to induce gasfitters and plumbers to set to work at once to convert a class-room into a kitchen, and a conservatory into a scullery. One room on the ground floor was turned into an admirable little operating theatre fitted with up-to-date equipment, all of which was lent. Beds, of course, had to be set up in all the rooms, and cupboards were hastily improvised until lockers could be obtained.

The Commandant had been warned that the patients (Belgians) would probably arrive in a sorely dirty condition, and she was determined to run no risk of having her newly cleaned Hospital soiled. A tent therefore was borrowed and set up in the grounds quite close to the front door, and this was warmed and made comfortable. Here the volunteer orderlies undressed the wounded men, washed them as far as possible, then wrapping them in warm blankets carried them into the Hospital and put them to bed.

Since that day there has seldom been an empty bed in the Hospital, for the Inspecting General declares it to be on a level with the best of all those in his district.

## CHAPTER XII

### V.A.D. Work in Ireland

IRELAND has not been behindhand in the matter of V.A.D. work, for long before the war broke out there were several St. John and B.R.C.S. Detachments scattered throughout the island. Under the energetic leadership of Dr. J. Lumsden, Director-in-Chief of the B.R.C.S. and St. John Ambulance in Ireland, a very large amount of good work has been done, both by men and women members of V.A. Detachments.

In the neighbourhood of Dublin there have been six Auxiliary Military Hospitals established largely by voluntary efforts. Dublin Castle, the first to be equipped, is a very fine place, and of course Dublin University makes a magnificent Hospital. Then there are the Princess Patricia Hospital at Bray; Monktown Hospital; Temple Hill Hospital, Black Rock; and Glenmaroon, Chapel Izod.

Dublin Castle Hospital has been entirely run by the City of Dublin Branch of the British Red Cross Society; but the other five have been staffed

jointly by St. John and B.R.C.S. members; and it is delightful to know that this intermingling of the two societies has been entirely successful.

The more the members work together the better must be the result, for now that we have a Joint Committee of representative men from the two Societies, every effort should be made to bring the members together in their work. Ireland seems to have done this particularly well, and as a matter of fact the Territorial Force Association members work in with the other two Societies without any kind of friction.

It was arranged that all the Units when mobilised should come under the control of the Joint V.A.D. Committee for Ireland. It was not intended in any way to interfere with the old machinery of either of the Societies, but that when mobilisation took place the Joint V.A.D. Committee should be in supreme command.

Once again let me say that I am giving prominence to the work in and around Dublin simply as being the centre and heart of Ireland, as it were, and therefore suggestive of what is going on in many parts of the island.

It is hoped that before long a "limbless" Hospital will be established at Bray. It will be run on the same lines as the one at Roehampton, London, where such marvellous things have been done in supplying artificial limbs to men who have lost their arms and legs.

*Male V.A. Detachments in Ireland.*

There are quite a number of these, and the members have distinguished themselves by their very excellent service, especially during the Sinn Fein Riots, about which I shall have a good deal to say later on.

Directly war was declared, about five hundred St. John members (male) were mobilised for Military Home Hospitals and Sick Berth Reserves. Upwards of three hundred Nursing Sisters volunteered for service in Military Hospitals at home and abroad, and a large number of women volunteered for special service as clerks, cooks, and dispensers.

*Sick Soldiers on Furlough.*

The Nursing Sisters of V.A. Detachments in Ireland have been doing some excellent work in visiting sick soldiers on furlough. Very often a man obtains permission to go to his home whilst he is still more or less ill, and it has meant a great deal to these men to be able to have the attention of a nurse.

*Docks and Railway Termini Work.*

Great assistance has been rendered to the Reception Committee at the Docks and railway termini by V.A.D. members.

*Massage.*

Massage, electrical, and radiant heat treatment have been given to a very large number of men by Miss Poole and her many skilled and willing helpers.

*Work Parties.*

Throughout Ireland there have been instituted working parties where Hospital comforts are made. The Irish War Hospital Supply Depots have done particularly good work throughout the country. They were inaugurated by the Marchioness of Waterford, who has given a great amount of time to the work with admirable results. She has 1,200 members on her books, and an average attendance of 120 a day. This alone shows the enormous amount of work which is turned out. For instance, 148 bales were dispatched between December and April of last year.

*Hospital Ships in the Liffey.*

To the many Hospital ships which came into the Liffey, much assistance has been given by the 200 trained stretcher-bearers who offered their services. They assisted the Military and the Irish Automobile Club members in convoying the wounded from the Hospital ships to the various city Hospitals. These stretcher parties were made up of St. John and B.R.C.S. members, and have

merited the praise which has been showered upon them because of their prompt and careful movement of injured men.

*Joint Clothing Depot.*

Over one hundred thousand have been dispatched to the Front by the Joint Clothing Depot, which has been run by the County Dublin Branch B.R.C.S. and St. John. A very large party of ladies have ungrudgingly given their time day after day to this work.

*Spagnum Moss Industry.*

In connection with this a new departure has been made — antisepticising the Spagnum Moss after it has been put into bags. The bags are soaked in corrosive sublimate, which is then squeezed out by passing the bag through a mangle. The Spagnum Moss is then hung up to dry for two days.

*Voluntary Stamp Saving Service.*

A band of young ladies undertook to deliver letters and circulars in and about Dublin for all war Societies and so save stamps.

*Irish V.A.D. Motorist on German Soil.*

Some members of the Irish V.A. Detachments (male) volunteered to go out with Motor Ambulances to assist the French Army, and they have

done a marvellously good work. So far the Allies cannot claim to be running over much German ground, but here is an Irish V.A.D. member who has been driving his Motor Ambulance backwards and forwards over German soil for many months.

Writing home from the neighbourhood of Alsace, he explained that he had just been moved from one part of France to another. "The General shook hands with us all round before we started, and a band played us off. We remained at R..... about ten days, and then came on to our present Headquarters, which are four miles from the Alsacian frontier, and twenty miles behind the firing line.

"The work here is quite different from what we have been accustomed to at C..... We have been frightfully busy, and for ten days none of us had our clothes off, and the only sleep we had was in our clothes and in a barn. The work is made very difficult owing to the mountainous nature of the country, and the fact that the roads are nearly always covered with deep snow and ice.

"We had three main spheres of operation; evacuating the wounded from the firing line to a Clearing Station, work between the Clearing Station and four Hospitals in the valley behind the trenches, and evacuating from these Hospitals over the pass across the Frontier. The worst part of our work is between the firing line and the Clearing Station.

"The wounded are carried on mules to the Dressing Station on the top of a plateau, and from there we take them down the mountain to the valley. The road is so steep in places that if a car has to stop it cannot start again without help, and it is so narrow that cars can only pass in certain parts.

"The whole road is often under fire; but about three hundred yards of it are absolutely wrecked by shell fire, and three days ago the two sheds on the top were blown to bits. The valley is also bombarded nearly every day, and last week we had four bombardments and an air raid in one day. Several of our cars have been hit, but so far none of us has been hurt.

"We have to do a great deal of work at night as well as all day. We all wear steel shrapnel helmets here, and carry respirators, so you can imagine something of what our conditions are. You will be glad to hear that the car is going well, and has been on German soil for three weeks."

With regard to what men members are doing, it is specially interesting to know that those who cannot undertake orderly or such work are helping at the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot.

In February, 1916, the Men's Section was formed for the manufacture of splints of all patterns, bed rests, bed tables, crutches, etc. A big building at the rear of 40 Merrion Square was fitted up as a huge workshop, and very soon many

expert amateur carpenters joined the ranks of workers, whilst others less experienced were content to act as "labourers."

Consignments were sent to Mesopotamia, Salonica, and to the Expeditionary Force in France, and in response to urgent appeals all sorts of Hospital comforts and necessities were dispatched to the Verdun front, and to other Hospitals working under the Croix Rouge. Gifts of timber and other necessary materials have been received from kind donors.

In April of 1916, a Metal Splint Department was started with great success. Splints are made after consultation with leading surgeons of H.M. Forces, some thirty voluntary workers giving their services every afternoon or evening.

Nearly half the material employed is waste metal, the clippings or remnants from sheet metal which are thrown out from large manufacturing shops being utilised. Much material hitherto almost worthless has been pressed into use.

The damaged wings, mud-guards, and panels of motor cars, when cut up by powerful shears and beaten into shape by willing hands, come to form cup-like supports for fractured limbs. The worn-out cauldron, bath, or galvanised tank is still capable of being converted into valuable surgical apparatus.

Combinations of work are called for, inviting the united abilities of many trades, and there is no

man who is skilled in any direction who cannot find useful scope for it in this magnificent work.

Metal splints are flexible and therefore permit the surgeon to bend them so that they will exactly fit the injured limb. The metal is also very light, which gives it an additional value over wood, and it is easily cleaned and disinfected.

Here is another branch of V.A.D. work which is almost exclusively performed by men, and it would be well if more Hospital Supply Depots started a Men's Section of this kind.

In the Central Depot (Dublin) there are about thirteen hundred enrolled workers. Then there are a hundred affiliated sub-depots throughout Ireland. All the work is done with the greatest economy, the expenses being carefully watched.

In several instances luncheon and tea rooms for the worker have become channels for profit, these rooms being managed so well that they make a surplus which can go towards paying for the lighting and heating of the premises. Each worker, though a volunteer, not only pays for meals supplied, but also pays for the privilege of being a worker.

In the Surgical Dressing Depot the scraps and clippings of materials are made into pads, swabs, cushions, etc., and in the Men's Section no odd piece of metal is allowed to be thrown away.

Ireland indeed may well be congratulated upon her voluntary war work.

## CHAPTER XIII

### V.A.D. Work in the Sinn Fein Riots

THE Sinn Fein Riots gave a sad but unique opportunity to Ambulance and Red Cross workers in Ireland of showing how they could cope with an emergency. The mischief, it is true, had been brewing for a long while, but few people realised that it could ever come to anything serious, and practically all the work that was done for the wounded was arranged on the spur of the moment.

Of all the magnificent pieces of work carried out by V.A. members during this devastating war, there has been nothing to surpass that which was accomplished in Dublin during those awful days when the rioters let loose their violence upon the city and its inhabitants.

From St. Patrick's Day, Friday, March 17th, 1916, up to Easter Monday, April 24th, the fire smouldered, with flashes of flame here and there, which gave an indication of what might be expected when the general outbreak occurred. On Easter Monday at noon the storm burst in Dublin, and for the following six days the city and suburbs were the scene of grave loss of life and destruction of property.

Dr. Lumsden issued a detailed report of the work done by Ambulance and Red Cross workers during the rebellion. The members, he said, lost no opportunity of rendering First Aid to soldiers, civilians and rebels alike. The general efficiency of the various Detachments was fiercely tested and not found wanting. Members performed duty in all the zones where fighting took place, and it is sad to say that some of them were killed and injured in the course of their work.

The wounded were collected by men and nurses, who went on foot and in Ambulance wagons, rendering First Aid and taking patients to Hospital under circumstances of great danger and difficulty.

The first move towards the organization of First Aid work in the rebellion was made by the late Corps Superintendent Holden Stodart, who on Easter Monday telephoned to the Military offering help. Two days later this heroic officer was killed, and his death made an impression throughout the Red Cross workers in Ireland which will not fade.

Mr. Stodart, who was only thirty-three, was one of the strongest supporters of the St. John Ambulance Brigade in Dublin, and since the outbreak of the war had rendered valuable service as a Superintendent of the Brigade. To the work he devoted himself with the whole-hearted enthusiasm that characterised everything he did.

Lady Superintendent-in-Chief's indoor uniform.

When the rebellion broke out in Dublin he was the senior St. John Ambulance officer then in the city, and the Military authorities were only too thankful to accept the help which he offered. His was an arduous task, for he organised bodies of Ambulance workers to take duty at the various Hospitals. Despite obstacles that might have seemed insurmountable to another man, he gathered his forces and placed them where their services were most needed. Once the organisation was complete, he settled down to carry on his own work under his superior officer, who had by then arrived on the spot.

The St. John Ambulance Brigade since the rebellion has awarded medals and certificates to a number of the officers who distinguished themselves in the work of the riots, but at present the Chapter-General of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem has no power to award posthumous honours.

In the report which was issued of the work, it is well said that those who knew Mr. Stodart best are content to think that

"Better than martial woe, or the burden of civic sorrow,
Better than praise to-day, or the statue we build to-morrow,
Better than honour and glory, from history's iron pen,
Is the thought of duty done, and the love of fellow men."

The War Office has decided to place the officers and men of the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Brigade working during the riots in the same position with regard to pensions and compassionate

allowances as the equivalent ranks in the Army, and in pursuance of this liberal policy the widow and child of Mr. H. Stodart have been granted the pension and allowance of a Lieutenant killed in action.

It was whilst Mr. Stodart was proceeding with a stretcher party to the relief of a wounded soldier that he was shot, and instantaneously died. His heroic death and noble example will ever be remembered amongst those who serve under the white eight-pointed star of the Ancient Knights of St. John.

*Pembroke Red Cross V.A.D.*

It chanced that on the Monday of the outbreak a member of a B.R.C.S. V.A. Detachment passed the Royal City of Dublin Hospital when the first of the wounded G.R. Volunteers arrived. He sent a message to assemble his Detachment, and they immediately took up duty in the various Hospitals. Some of them took in wounded men on stretchers under circumstances of great danger.

Mr. Dickson of this Detachment was specially mentioned for his good work in connection with the running of the Rathmines Ambulance. On Wednesday the 24th it ran from Portobello Military Hospital to Beggars' Bush Barracks, being in danger of being shot at all the journey. During that night he made five journeys with the Ambulance, and in the following two days he made

several journeys and assisted in evacuating some of the cases, and also in taking drugs and necessities to the small Hospital at Beggars' Bush.

*Difficulties of the Work.*

Imagine the conditions under which the work was carried out. The tram and train service had ceased; postal and telegraph facilities no longer existed. The telephone service was completely controlled by the Military, and all the usual ways and means of communication were cut off; yet obstacles were surmounted by the V.A.D. members.

One of them was repulsed by the insurgents at two places, but succeeded in getting through at the third; another was twice fired at whilst driving a Motor Ambulance, and a third walked twelve miles out of his direct route in order to get through to his destination.

Richmond Hospital was the centre of the area where fierce fighting took place. As the danger increased, the beds were placed on the floor to avoid bullets fired from the housetops. In the middle of the week food ran short at the Hospital, and Miss Hezlett, the Lady Superintendent, cooperated in the organization of an expedition to obtain more. On a white sheet the words "Richmond Hospital Supplies" were marked with black type, and Dr. Pollock and two students, bearing this banner, took out a borrowed horse and cart.

In spite of having to go through some hot firing they returned safely with supplies.

At the Rotunda Hospital food almost gave out, and extreme economy had to be practised. Eventually, when a gallant friend sent down food on a van, the driver was fired at, but luckily got through unhurt.

Gas was cut off on Tuesday morning, and the electricity on Wednesday. Working in semi-darkness added enormously to the difficulty of the situation. The nursing staff, however, maintained a wonderful degree of calmness under the stress of work, whilst there was an accompaniment of roaring cannon and spitting bullets.

*Ambulance Patrol.*

On Easter Tuesday it was decided to start an Ambulance Patrol with its Headquarters in Harcourt Street Railway Station. Day by day the cars ran the gauntlet of bullet-swept streets, being frequently struck by shots. Dangers, always present by day, increased a hundredfold by night. The darkened streets had to be negotiated without the aid of lights. The voluntary drivers were wonderful in the way they kept up a high speed and yet managed to take their load of wounded men through in safety.

Glass was everywhere. Tram wires, coiled in big loops, lay about, and in one place a huge length of telephone wire coiled itself round the

wheels of a car. In the daytime the drivers had to memorise the danger spots where houses and walls were down, so that they should not run amuck at night. Many a time the drivers were asked to go and fetch wounded men across a dangerous area, and in every case they just "cranked up" their cars and went without a word.

When the ordinary cars could get no further there was an armoured motor car which carried stretchers right into the thick of the fight. It would turn broadside so as to give the stretcher-bearers as much shelter as possible from the snipers.

The bearers would lie down and wriggle along the streets, pulling the stretchers after them. It is never easy to load a stretcher with a wounded man, but add to the difficulties pitch darkness and the fact that you must yourself lie on the ground and it becomes apparently impossible. But the impossible was achieved again and again by these gallant men, who did their duty as simply and as courageously as those other Red Cross men who are working on foreign battle-fields against a common foe. These bearers often had to walk half a mile under cross fire.

*Gallant Conduct.*

Amongst so many instances of gallantry and conspicuous courage it is difficult to mention any names in particular. For instance, Mr. Henry

Olds was informed that a wounded man was lying on O'Connell Bridge. He hastened there and found that a blind man had been seriously wounded.

First Aid was applied, but whilst he was putting on the bandage he was himself shot in the shoulder. This, however, did not prevent him completing his work, and he managed to bring the man to a place of safety before he became unconscious himself.

On Wednesday work was allotted to a great number of St. John officers and men who wished to assist, a room being placed at the disposal of the Brigade in the City of Dublin Hospital, Baggot Street.

*Corrig Castle Red Cross Hospital.*

Dr. Reginald Peacocke, Assistant County Director of the County of Dublin Branch of the B.R.C.S., speaks highly of the work done by the V.A.D. members, especially at Corrig Castle Red Cross Hospital.

There was a continuous procession at the Hospital of refugees, amongst them being two stokers from H.M.S. "Tara," who had been liberated by the Duke of Westminster's armoured car expedition, and who were passing through Kingstown on their way home, but were unable to proceed.

Owing to the great difficulty in procuring food,

bread had to be baked and butter churned on the premises, some of the V.A.D. members being on duty for fourteen hours a day, whilst the Matron, Miss Harris, Commandant, was on duty for three days and three nights continuously.

The British Red Cross branches of the City and County of Dublin took a large share in the work. Mrs. Heppell-Marr, Assistant County Director of the City of Dublin Branch, was at her post at 29, Fitzwilliam Street, each day, and many members of the B.R.C.S. Detachments took their share in carrying the wounded in under fire. The offices at 29, Fitzwilliam Street, were converted into a temporary hospital, the V.A.D. members collecting supplies from the public. This Hospital contained fifty beds.

Another Hospital, with twenty-five beds, was set up at 32, Fitzwilliam Square.

*Refugee Women and Children.*

All kinds of duties were taken over by the Detachments, whilst isolated members helped refugee women and children, gave assistance at the B.R.C.S. Dressing Stations, carried bales of dressings on stretchers to the various Hospitals, fed the starving poor and rendered First Aid to civilians.

One Detachment started a Canteen for soldiers; another kept a Canteen going at the munition works throughout the riots.

*Women Stretcher-Bearers.*

In pre-war days many were the discussions as to whether women could or should do stretcher work. The women V.A.D. members in Ireland settled the question once and for all because an enormous amount of stretcher work was carried out by them most successfully.

There were not nearly enough men to do this work, and the women showed not only their knowledge of how to do it, but their complete indifference to danger when it became a matter of duty that they should go out and rescue wounded people in the shell-swept streets. They made regular tours in the city, and rendered First Aid to the wounded before they brought them into the Hospitals.

*Filling Gaps.*

All sorts of gaps were filled by the devoted members of V.A. Detachments during that terrible week in Dublin. At the Castle Hospital it was found that there was exceeding difficulty in getting the laundry work done. V.A.D. members volunteered to do it, and everything went well. Washing, cooking, kitchen work—it did not matter what it was, what kind of labour was required; it was all cheerfully and capably undertaken by V.A.D. members.

*Ella Webb, M.D.*

Dr. Ella Webb, Lady District Superintendent of S.J.A.B., and member of the Joint V.A.D. Committee for Ireland, rendered splendid service during the rebellion, for she organized Hospitals, and cycled through the firing line continuously. She visited the City Hospitals day by day, ascertaining their needs and giving all possible assistance. She and Dr. Lumsden were both awarded silver medals by the Chapter-General of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem for their services during the week of the riot.

Dr. Webb, in the report which she issued later, remarks that she was particularly struck with the two great lessons which the V.A.D. members had learned; the first was to be plucky, resourceful and competent, and the second was to obey. She says: "I was particularly struck with the way in which members took their orders to devote themselves to dull, arduous and uninteresting work with the same cheerfulness as to nursing in the wards."

*Dr. John Lumsden, M.D.*

Dr. John Lumsden, M.D., Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Deputy Commissioner of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, Director General of the Joint V.A.D. Committee for Ireland, showed extraordinary courage

throughout the rebellion. He was always in the thick of the fight.

An eyewitness, speaking of his work, said: "His conduct was simply magnificent. He is the bravest man I ever saw. He coolly and calmly knelt in the middle of the road attending to the wounded soldiers, while bullets were fired from the houses on both sides. He helped the men into the Ambulance wagons himself, sent them off, and waited until they returned, and during all the time he was under a heavy cross fire."

He was under fire for several hours together. Day by day the Ambulance cars ran the gauntlet of bullet-swept streets. The dangers increased a hundredfold by night, when the streets, shrouded in darkness and encumbered by obstacles, had to be negotiated without the aid of lights. Ambulances were frequently struck by shots whilst on their journeys.

In one house where six or seven wounded soldiers were found the men managed under these conditions to get the wounded loaded on to the stretchers and into the armoured cars in safety. Two bearers had very narrow escapes, bullets passing through their clothing; one stretcher handle had its end knocked off. Several bullets struck the armoured car as it left.

Another typical feature was the extreme care and correct handling given by the stretcher-bearers amidst the most nerve-trying conditions.

Their first thought was for the comfort of the patient, and the best method of ensuring his safe and comfortable transport.

The Military casualties during the insurrection amounted to some five hundred, and the civilian losses in killed and wounded amounted to more than a thousand, so some idea may be formed of the emergencies under which the Ambulance men and women of Dublin worked during that week.

*Nursing Detachments.*

The chief piece of work undertaken by the Nursing Divisions was the transformation of the War Hospital Supply Depot in Merrion Square into a temporary Hospital. This was carried out in the amazingly short time of three hours.

Dr. Ella Webb sent out messages at noon to members to report themselves, and at 2 P.M. girls began to arrive, though in many cases their journeys had been hazardous. At five o'clock that afternoon an amputation was being done in the improvised operating theatre, and quite half of the thirty beds were already full.

Dr. Webb says in her report: "As this work entailed the carrying in by hand of all mattresses, beds, bedding, and utensils from the neighbouring houses, and the clearing away of large, heavy work tables with which the rooms were originally filled, it is a performance of which the V.A.D. members have every right to be proud."

*Auxiliary Hospitals.*

Seven Auxiliary Hospitals were equipped by other Detachments. In one case a Hospital was helped by a band of ladies who organized an all-day working party for dressings, etc., and a food supply party. Large quantities of both food and dressings were provided.

Too much praise cannot be given to the ladies of the Red Cross Branches of the City and County of Dublin for the work which they performed during the rebellion, and it is impossible here to mention the individual acts of gallantry which were done by many members.

A great many temporary Hospitals were equipped and made absolutely ready for the reception of patients, which happily were never used, as the rebellion was quickly quelled by the authorities.

*Kingstown Men's Detachment.*

This Detachment was mobilised, and on Thursday, April 27th, twelve of them left Kingstown and marched into Ballsbridge, and reported to the M.O. in command of the R.A.M.C. there. On the following day they returned to Kingstown, and did excellent work at Corrig Castle Hospital.

Many Military and Naval refugees arrived at the Hospital, which added considerably to the work of the staff, as they all had to be fed and

housed, the majority of them remaining about ten days. A number of soldiers were brought in on Tuesday, including an R.A.M.C. Captain who had been wounded, and a number of men suffering from vaccination fever. Shortly afterwards there arrived five Queen Alexandra nurses on their way to King George V Hospital. In fact, there was a continuous procession of refugees, both Military and civilian.

There was such terrible difficulty in procuring bread that the kitchen was turned into a bakery, and even butter was churned on the premises. Some of the V.A.D. members were on duty day and night.

*Canteens.*

Canteens were opened in various places so that the soldiers on duty might be fed, and these were for the most part entirely run by V.A.D. members. Of one lady who was in charge of a Canteen, it is recorded that she never went off duty for eleven days, taking only snatches of sleep in a chair.

*Smart Work.*

The Misses J. and R. Fitzpatrick first reported to the Military authorities the seizure by the Sinn Feiners of various points of vantage. During the whole of the rebellion they worked in the hottest and most dangerous fighting zone. They warned

the incoming soldiers and troops and acted as guides to them.

They gave First Aid to any number of wounded Military and civilians, and they carried the wounded from under fire to places of safety. They provided food for the soldiers in the trenches on the Canal bank, and elsewhere, and all the time they were passing to and fro, their garden being under a severe cross fire from troops and rebels.

*A Dramatic Incident.*

It was on the Wednesday evening following Easter Monday that the Sherwood Foresters marched towards Dublin into the death trap that awaited them in the neighbourhood of Northumberland Road. Into the inferno the Lady Superintendent and nurses of Sir Patrick Dun's Nursing Home bravely set forth at about four o'clock in the afternoon. They were the first on the scene, and they improvised stretchers out of quilts.

The resident medical staff of the Hospital were also gallantly engaged in this rescue work, and between them they carried seventy-nine wounded men, including soldiers and rebels, into the Home. This work went on from four in the afternoon until midnight. Men and women alike rendered aid under fire with the utmost coolness and courage.

A soldier who had been for many months in the

Outdoor uniform of a Lady Superintendent-in-Chief.

trenches in France and happened to be in Dublin on leave during the riots told me that he had never seen hotter fire than that which swept the streets of the Irish capital.

Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital became full to overflowing with wounded, and its approaches were so constantly swept with rifle fire that it was found necessary to throw open the Maternity Hospital for the treatment of casualties. In all some forty bullet wounds of a shocking nature were treated at the Hospital, twelve of them proving fatal.

The priests attached to St. Andrew's Church, close by, were constantly in the thick of the danger, ministering to the wounded and dying.

It is satisfactory to know that the Sinn Feiners always respected the sign of the Red Cross and never deliberately fired upon an Ambulance or a Hospital.

Enough has been said to give some slight notion of the magnificence of the work which was carried out by each and every Detachment in the district where the riots took place. Instances of personal courage there were without number, and although we can only mention a few here as being typical of all the others, we are glad to know that their services have been recognized by the War Office and by the authorities of the Red Cross Societies.

Terrible indeed it was that such an occasion should ever arise; but since the thing happened one can only be thankful that there was already

prepared a body of men and women, efficiently trained, capable and willing, who could deal with the emergency.

Of doctors and regular trained nurses there could not have possibly been anything like enough to cope with the situation, and there can be no doubt that the work of the V.A. Detachments in Ireland proves how invaluable they are to a country whether it be at war or enjoying peace.

One can scarcely dare to imagine what would have happened to those hundreds of wounded men and women in the streets of Dublin during that awful week had there not been this devoted band of voluntary workers who had trained themselves in the principles of First Aid, of stretcher-bearing, and of elementary nursing.

The work which was done by the V.A. Detachments in the Sinn Fein riots alone must prove to the whole world how necessary it is that patriotic men and women should identify themselves with the Voluntary Aid Detachment movement, learning not only the principles of how to render help under such circumstances, but perhaps the even more important matters of discipline, and of carrying out any bit of work which comes to hand and which is an infinitesimal fragment in the design of Mercy which was pictured for the world by the pioneers of Red Cross work.

## CHAPTER XIV

### V.A.D. Work in France

"DESTINATION unknown!" Soldiers are not the only people who cross the seas knowing not at all the place for which they are bound, for many V.A.D. members step on board the Channel boat with no more definite instructions than "report yourselves at Headquarters in Boulogne." It is only one more of the odd experiences which war has given to some of us and no one quarrels with it.

The principal V.A.D. Commandant in France, Miss Rachel Crowdy, R.R.C., has a big task on her hands, but she handles it with masterly skill, with broad common-sense and, above all, with justice. She shows no favour to British Red Cross Society members, although she was a member of that Society some years before the war broke out, and she puts St. John or British Red Cross Society members into this or that post simply according to their suitability. I can speak from personal experience of her sense of "fair play" (a quality in which women are supposed—quite wrongly—to be lacking), and no words can express

the esteem in which I hold her after having worked under her for nine and a half months. Directly a woman V.A.D. member arrives in France she is absolutely under Miss Crowdy's control, so that this lady, young though she be in years, holds all the threads of V.A.D. work, which stretch like a vast cobweb over the war zone in France.

First of all let me try to give you a picture of the work in its entirety. There are hundreds of V.A.D. members working as nurses and orderlies in the great Military Hospitals at the various Bases; there are dozens of members working in the same way in Auxiliary Red Cross Hospitals; there are members who spend their whole lives on railway stations, attending to the wounded as they come straight down from the firing line. There are Units of girl motorists who drive ambulances, and dozens of others who run canteens for convalescent soldiers who have not had the luck to be sent to England and who are sadly in need of the understanding word given by a woman whilst she ministers to their physical comforts. Some V.A.D. members do nothing but clerical work, many being engaged in the sad labour of trying to trace "Missing" men. This is a specially self-sacrificing bit of work, it always seems to me, for it means close work in an office from morning to night, often with but small results. When, however, a man is traced, the joy of the relatives surely more than repays the worker for

much which must sometimes seem to be labour in vain.

There are altogether thirty-three different kinds of V.A.D. Units in France! Following our instructions, we will first go to the Headquarters, which is a big Hotel that has been entirely taken over by the Joint Committee. Here all the heads of Departments have offices. Miss Fletcher, Chief of all Trained Nurses in France, has an office here and works in great harmony with Miss Crowdy. The Trained Sisters have learned to appreciate the work of V.A.D. members and freely acknowledge that they could not possibly manage without them; whilst on the part of the members they give respect and willing obedience to the skilled women who have spent years in acquiring their knowledge of nursing. There is wonderfully little friction, considering the enormous number of people who have been thrown to work together suddenly and under somewhat difficult circumstances.

Here again we get a very valuable fusion of classes. Difficulties arise abroad which can never be encountered in England, and it is, perhaps, the surmounting of these obstacles which tears down any of the old feelings of opposition and makes the majority of workers labour together in marvellous accord.

There is something very fine in seeing a group of V.A.D. members at work at a little Outpost in

France, some of them wearing the Red Crosses upon their aprons, which show them to be members of the British Red Cross Society; whilst others wear the white eight-pointed star, which signifies their membership of St. John. Each one is proud of her own Society, and the unimportant differences are frequently discussed with considerable interest; but it is rare indeed to trace a bitter word, or to note a suggestion of superiority on the part of either the one or the other.

Women in the highest ranks of society are content to scrub and clean; many a highly intellectual woman is working in the kitchen or the pantry or the linen-room of Hospitals in France, with dogged determination to overcome the awful fatigue entailed by these physical labors. Surely these women can take place side by side with the cultured men who have enlisted and have uncomplainingly endured the rough food, the hard sleeping-places, the companionship of men utterly apart from themselves in taste, in order that they should take their place in the great fight.

Miss Rose Macaulay, in her poem "Many Sisters to Many Brothers," says very truly:

"Oh, it's you that have the luck, out there in blood and muck:
You were born beneath a kindly star;
All we dreamt, I and you, you can really go and do,
And I can't, the way things are.
In a trench you are sitting, while I am knitting
A hopeless sock that never gets done.
Well, here's luck, my dear;—and you've got it, no fear;
But for me . . . a war is poor fun."

Women must needs be content with doing the humbler jobs which go to build up the defence of our Empire.

In France the workers are brought face to face with the horrors of war. Down at the Base Hospitals they have the men coming in direct from the trains which have brought them from the trenches, and their condition is pitiable beyond words. But even more, the members who are placed further up the line get a glimpse of the conditions under which our men fight.

"I do not suppose I really understand a bit what it is like," said a V.A.D. member to a young officer; "but it was bad enough to see the men on their way down to the Base just a few hours after they had been hit."

"I think you have a very good understanding," he returned. "You get your stories first-hand; and whilst everything was fresh in the minds of the men they would be likely to speak more openly than they do after some days have elapsed."

"I noticed that," said the girl. "Men coming down from the firing line, with their clothes torn off their backs by the barbed wire, and first with field dressings on their wounds, would 'blurt out' things which I never heard from a man in Hospital. It was as though they were obsessed with the horror of it all, and although I never once heard a grumble or a bad word, they let little facts drop which, pieced together, have taken definite

form in my mind. It is exactly as if I had been putting together a jig-saw puzzle, for all the odd, queer remarks made by these men who had been in the trenches actually fighting the enemy only a few hours previously are gradually assimilated by one's mind; and after a time one finds unconsciously that there grows a complete and ineffaceable picture, as it were, in one's brain."

That is really the secret of the difference of the work abroad and at home. Undoubtedly there are V.A. members who go forward with their work, carrying it through most excellently, but without ever touching on the inner side of war; but the majority feel it is the greatest privilege that has ever fallen to their lot to have been allowed to see beneath the surface, and to get some faint knowledge of what the men suffer for honour's sake.

*The Network in France.*

Here again we will follow the same plan as that which we pursued in England. I will try to give you a glimpse of the network in France, and show you what men and women V.A.D. members are weaving there for the benefit of our soldiers. Naturally out there the majority of men are in the Army, and for the most part it is the women who are engaged in V.A.D. work, though there are numbers of men over military age who are rendering magnificent service to the Joint Societies.

## CHAPTER XV

### Red Cross and St. John Hospitals in France.

THERE are in France a great many large Hospitals which come under the general term of Red Cross Hospitals. This means that they are not General or Stationary Military Hospitals, but are kept up by Red Cross funds and are staffed by Red Cross members, though in every case fully trained Sisters are in charge of the wards.

Naturally these Hospitals form a very large field of operations for V.A.D. members, both men and women, for there are a good many posts which must be filled by men, and in which voluntary workers of over military age are giving signal service.

For the first year of the war a large number of Red Cross orderlies were used in these Hospitals, but it became necessary that they should be released for other work, and women belonging to V.A. Detachments came forward eagerly to fill their places.

For instance, in a very large Hospital in one of the big French towns, which is an English Base, something like a hundred men orderlies were re-

leased, and their places were taken by girls, who have proved great successes as orderlies. When it is remembered what it means to be an orderly in a Hospital, we cannot but admire these women, most of them highly educated and delicately nurtured, who have thrown themselves into the gap made by the departure of the men, and who cheerfully carry out the arduous labour which falls to the share of the orderly in Hospital.

In these Red Cross Hospitals the work for V.A.D. members is apportioned with the greatest care. There are those who have had some nursing experience who are put into the wards to act as probationers under the Sisters. When there is a big push on, and the Hospital is filled to overflowing by wounded men who come down direct from the Front, these girls have the chance of proving themselves exceedingly useful to the Sisters.

In many cases they have benefited by their year or so in Hospital to such an extent that they can be perfectly well trusted with certain responsible tasks, and Matrons and Sisters have constantly told me when I have visited various Hospitals that some of the experienced V.A.D. members are quite as good as regular staff Hospital nurses. This is high praise, because a fully trained woman realises that no risks must be taken where a wounded man is in the case; and a V.A.D. nurse must show herself not only conscientious and

hard-working, but really capable and efficient, before she is put into any position of trust.

I have known V.A.D. members who have been given charge of wards (always under the supervision of a Sister of an adjoining ward) who have been theatre nurses, who have acted as "specials" to very serious cases, who have looked after isolation patients, and who have had under their charge a large number of German wounded.

In fact, there is no kind of nursing work which has not been carried out at one time or another by a V.A.D. member; but it must be remembered that there are an infinite number of grades of knowledge amongst these members, from the fully trained Sister who gives her services voluntarily and is a V.A.D. member herself down to the girl who has never taken even a First Aid certificate, but has enrolled herself under the General Service Regulations of the Voluntary Aid Movement. It is a great pity that there has come to be a general notion on the part of the public that "V.A.D." is synonymous with "untrained." They are not untrained, neither are they often "fully trained."

All of these grades of workers are to be met, and it is exceedingly interesting to visit them and see exactly what is being done. In one Hospital in France, which I know very well indeed, two fully trained nurses who had belonged to Voluntary Aid Detachments long before war broke out have given their services for over two years.

They are very fully qualified women, and they emphasize the fact by being able and willing to do anything and everything that comes to hand.

Naturally they take the responsible part of the nursing, but they nobly share in the lowlier tasks of the Hospital when they threaten to overwhelm the staff. These fully trained Sisters take their turn to get up in the early morning and light the fires, and when there is extra pressure in the kitchen or in the house, by reason of the sudden illness perhaps of a member of the staff, they cheerfully and capably put their hands to the plough.

This is an example which must not be overlooked, because it calls for a special kind of praise and appreciation. The fully trained women who have joined Voluntary Aid Detachments and have thus become V.A.D. members have absorbed the spirit of the movement, and instead of looking down upon their members who are only half or quarter trained, as it were, they realise the valuable work done by the humbler folk in this great organization.

*Linen Store-keepers.*

The linen store of a great Hospital gives a rare opportunity for the display of organization and method on the part of its keeper.

At a certain Red Cross Hospital, where there are 500 beds, between 5,000 and 6,000 articles go

to the laundry each week, and of course there are a large number in reserve. Imagine the chaos of having soiled sheets and pillow-cases running into hundreds if there were not a wonderful method employed.

This work is almost invariably done alone by one or two V.A.D. members. They spend their lives in the store, receiving soiled and giving out clean linen, but their task does not end there, since every torn or worn article must be mended before it is allowed to go into the Hospital again.

The linen is kept strictly on Military principles, and the first sight of the books which are sent down by the Military authorities is quite enough to frighten the ordinary woman; but the linen store-keeper bravely tackles them and surmounts all difficulties. She gradually falls into the routine, which is much easier than it looks, and it is a rare occurrence for one of these Red Cross Hospitals to lose a single article, though it must be acknowledged that the store-keeper goes through many an anxious moment when she thinks some such disaster has befallen her.

The linen store room becomes a kind of centre to which everyone goes who wants a job of needlework done quickly. In one of the big Red Cross Hospitals in a French town a St. John V.A.D. member has created a very enviable character for herself, because she is always willing to help in

all sorts of ways those who are in "sewing" difficulties.

At Christmas time she showed her ingenuity by making fancy-dress costumes at very small cost, to be worn by those who were entertaining the patients; and once when a Lieutenant got his promotion almost at the same moment that he had orders to move on to another town, she deftly added his stars and stripes to his tunic in an incredibly short space of time. He was particularly anxious to have his new rank shown for special reasons, and was most grateful to the store-keeper, as no tailor in the town would have undertaken the job in the allotted time.

The linen shelves are kept with exquisite tidiness, and the orderlies have been so inspired with the charm of neatness that they take as much pride in the appearance of the store-room as the store-keeper does herself.

There is a huge amount of mending and making to be done of all kinds, from putting delicate stitchery into dainty toilet accessories down to mending a carpet which "has seen its best days," as the member said when she looked up, smiling, from the unwieldy fabric in her hand.

When there is a convoy going out to "dear old Blighty" the store-keeper has a busy time of it. Sometimes she sees from her window a man lying on a stretcher without slippers, muffler, or helmet,

and she rushes out and puts them on before he is carried away.

Work starts at 7.45 A.M., and the store-keeper is supposed to lock up and get away at seven o'clock in the evening, having had her usual time off during the day; but very often odd jobs turn up which necessitate her going back to the store and putting in an hour's work or more before she goes to bed.

A complete system of "chits" is used in the store, everything that is wanted in the wards being asked for on a chit by the Sister in charge. These chits are copied and filed for further reference. All laundry bills are checked before they are paid, and a complete record is kept of everything that goes into the store or leaves it.

*St. John Brigade Hospital.*

One of the many wonderful sights to be seen in France during these war months is a certain northern seaport which has become nothing more nor less than a town of Hospitals.

I had travelled all night under circumstances which were more warlike than comfortable. I had immensely enjoyed the luxury of washing my face and hands, in spite of the fact that the only utensil to hand was a saucepan, and in the very early hours of the morning we slowly steamed into the little station which has become an important one for war work.

I had been fortunate enough to be sent on a

special mission to visit the St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, and the twenty-four hours I spent there have left a strong impression upon me.

As we approached the little town by the long bridge which crosses the estuary there my attention was drawn to marvellous sights. There on the ridge of sand-dunes were lines and lines of white tents, intersected here and there by groups of brown wooden huts. That was in the early days of the war, but in the course of time the tents were made less conspicuous, and in many places were entirely replaced by huts.

An Ambulance had been sent to meet me, and as I sat on the front seat and we dashed over the cobbled stones of the quaint little town whilst it was still only 6 A.M., I was conscious of a thrill, and also of being the recipient of a great privilege in being allowed to see the inner working of this great Hospital only a few weeks after it had been opened.

From the very beginning the Hospital was entirely under the control of Sir James Clark, Chief Commissioner of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, and it has been entirely maintained by subscriptions given direct to it.

It is, in fact, the modern outcome of the wonderful work which was founded by the Knights of St. John in the Eleventh Century. A flag of the same device as that which they flew in those days floats now over the Brigade Hospital, and

Outdoor uniform of a Commandant of V.A.D.

the entire staff of the Hospital are men and women who are closely connected with the St. John Ambulance Brigade, which forms a very important part of the Ambulance Department of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England.

In the vast majority of cases members of the Brigade are also members of Voluntary Aid Detachments, so that in writing about V.A.D. work in France it would be quite wrong not to make some reference to the work of this Hospital, which is said by the Military authorities to be one of the finest in France.

In some respects its equipment is better than any other, and its staff has been chosen with such extreme care that the working of the whole place goes on oiled wheels.

The site on which the Hospital stands is a beautiful one, for it occupies a large area on sand-dunes which rise some little way behind the seashore. The wards are large huts which will accommodate some thirty beds, and at the end of each ward there is a small kitchen and all lavatory arrangements, with a clever ventilation shaft, as it were, between the ward and its kitchen and the sanitary portion. All the wards are connected by wooden corridors, which are open at the sides but have roofs, so that the nurses and orderlies are always under cover when they pass from one part of the Hospital to another.

The quarters for the Matron and Sisters occupy

one long building, whilst a smaller one is given over to the V.A.D. nurses. The orderlies also have excellent quarters across the road, and there is a nice building which accommodates the medical staff.

There are 580 beds in the Hospital, and about fifty-two fully trained Sisters are employed, with a staff of twenty-four V.A.D. members under them. The food is all cooked by orderlies, but the parlour-maid and housemaid work is entirely undertaken by V.A.D. members.

The Hospital, which is now in charge of Lt.-Col. Trimble, R.A.M.C., who has for many years been an enthusiastic St. John worker in Lancashire, is run on extremely economical lines, the Matronship being held by Miss Constance Tod, R.R.C.

Lt.-Col. Trimble, in speaking of the nursing staff, says: "After my experience in this Hospital I can safely say that no body of women could have discharged their duties in a more conscientious, kind and painstaking manner than the trained Sisters who have served with us. They have really been most self-denying in every possible way in the interests of the patients placed under their charge."

"I would just like to add a word respecting our V.A.D. members. All who have come to us have had their minds made up to make themselves useful in every way possible. Our rule has been that

these girls have had to manage the Sisters' Mess. They have had to keep it tidy, serve the meals, and do general washing up, having a couple of orderlies to assist them.

"With regard to their work in the wards I have no words of praise that would quite meet what they have done. Many of them had considerable nursing experience in other Hospitals before coming to us. Others had little or none.

"After a year and a half's work there are many of our V.A.D. members whom I consider very capable nurses, and so good are they that it is an everyday occurrence that these girls are placed in absolute charge of wards, both medical and surgical.

"It would be superfluous to comment upon the manner in which their work has been discharged, but I can safely say that no body of girls could have entered more thoroughly or seriously into their duties, with the result that the work is excellently done in every respect. The trained Sisters now acknowledge that they have found the V.A.D. members very helpful associates and most agreeable companions. The patients love and respect them, for, like the trained Sisters, they have been more than conscientious in everything they have done."

That the work of these girls has been exceptionally good is shown by the fact that twelve of them have been honoured by the Order of St. John of

Jerusalem by being made Honorary Serving Sisters of that Order. This distinction is only given after very careful consideration by the Chapter of the Order, and then cannot be bestowed without the approval of the King.

Quite a number of distinguished people have taken regular work in this Hospital, amongst them being Lady Perrott, R.R.C., Lady Superintendent-in-Chief of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. From the day war was declared Lady Perrott has worked unceasingly, but necessarily, from her position in the Brigade, a great deal of it has had to be administrative work discharged from Headquarters.

Happily she knows the work practically as well as from the point of view of a Chief, and on various occasions she has taken the place of a V.A.D. member in Hospitals in England as well as in the Brigade Hospital in France.

In the latter she worked regularly for some time, and this was a matter of congratulation to all those who love the Brigade, and who know quite well that its usefulness to the nation has depended not a little upon the fact that every one of its members, from the highest to the lowest, has to be fully qualified in those arts of First Aid and elementary nursing which may well be called the backbone of all ambulance work.

There is something very poetic and very fine in having a great Hospital in France run entirely

under the auspices of the Brigade, with the Chief Commissioner at the helm, with the Lady Superintendent-in-Chief working there regularly for a time, and with every post filled by Brigade members. This gives another aspect of V.A.D. work of which no more need be said, for much can be read between the lines by those who are interested.

In connection with the Brigade Hospital in France there has now been opened a Depot in London, where all sorts of Hospital equipment will be made. Halkyn House, Belgrave Square, has most generously been placed at the disposal of the Ladies' Committee of the Order of St. John by Earl Beauchamp, and the work of making bandages and dressings will be carried out there on a very extensive scale.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Rest Stations in France.

AS one steps off the Channel boat on to Boulogne Quai, the first thing to strike one forcibly is the change which war has brought about in the French town. There are still a few French porters running about in their blue smocks; but they are all old men or exceedingly young ones, and to every Frenchman there are at least two English Tommies, or so it seems.

The wearing of a recognized Red Cross uniform smooths the way for one extraordinarily so far as the Customs are concerned because the authorities know quite well that every member who is sent out is put on his or her honour only to carry legitimate articles.

During the early part of the war there was a wonderful Stationary Hospital which the Military authorities had built up in goods sheds close to the Quai, and it was my privilege to be allowed to go through it.

The Stationary Hospitals now employ many V.A.D. members; but at the beginning of the war military hospital work was entirely carried out by Military Sisters and R.A.M.C. officers and men. It was perfectly wonderful to see how these old

sugar sheds had been converted into a good, clean, cheery Hospital.

In the entrance there sat a non-commissioned officer, who took down the particulars of each case as it was brought in and assigned to it a bed in a special ward. The stretcher-bearers would then take the case on and would put the patient to bed with the assistance, if necessary, of one of the Army Sisters.

In the first shed, which had been turned into a great ward, there were rows upon rows of beds. The shed had been whitewashed, and on the walls there were pinned coloured pictures from the "Christmas Annual," conspicuous amongst them being several portraits of the King and Queen. At one end of the ward there were tables strewn with magazines and games, where the convalescent men could amuse themselves, and at the other end a portion was cut off as a dispensary and dressing room, where "walking" cases could come for re-dressing.

Turning to the right, there was a very large ward devoted to the saddest of all the cases, as it seems to me—to the men who had suffered injury to the eyes. The light here was kept very dim, but many of the men were chatting together, and the Sisters seemed to be particularly cheery.

Another portion of the Hospital was given over to the men who had been gassed. It made one's heart ache to see them gasping for breath, but it

was good to hear that many new remedies had been discovered, which made the percentage of recoveries very much larger than they were at first.

During the advances after the terrible retreat this Hospital was crowded out; so much so that one of the Army Sisters told me she had often seen a stretcher with a patient upon it under every bed. The Doctors and the Sisters and the entire staff worked night and day during these pushes, and all honour to them be it said that they kept their Hospital up to a high standard of efficiency, and that they themselves remained optimistic and undismayed.

At that time Boulogne was in a very different position, from the military point of view, from what it is to-day, and they never knew from one moment to another what orders might come through about a general evacuation.

This is but a glimpse at a Military Hospital, for it has no direct bearing on the work about which I am writing; but I could not pass it by without adding an humble word of appreciation. This particular Military Hospital is only typical of the huge numbers which exist all over France and England, and no poor words of mine can give any adequate idea of the amount of self-sacrifice which has been put into the upkeep of these Hospitals by the devoted men and women who staff them.

Across the wide, cobble-stoned road we make our way to the big railway station in Boulogne, which is the parent, as it were, of all Rest Stations in France.

In the very early days, when things were still chaotic, a little band of V.A.D. members under the command of Mrs. Furse, R.R.C. (who has since become Commandant-in-Chief), established by permission of the Military authorities a Rest Station there.

During the great advances, when we get thousands of wounded, many of them happily being of a minor character, the regular Hospital trains cannot possibly carry them all. The rail heads (the furthest points to which the railways can run near the firing line) become choked up with wounded men, and the first necessity is to get rid of them and send them down to the Base Hospitals.

There is a system in the Army by which every wounded man wears a distinctive label to show whether his wound is serious or not. The serious cases are put at once on the regular Ambulance trains, which are most wonderfully fitted up with an operating theatre and kitchens, and which carry three Medical Officers, three fully trained Sisters, and a great many R.A.M.C. orderlies. The road is more or less cleared by the railway authorities for these Ambulance trains, and they make the journey down to the Base in fairly good time.

But what is to be done with the thousands of "walking" cases which cannot be put upon Ambulance trains? They are men with wounds of very divers character, some of them very slight, some of them severe, but none vital nor likely to become dangerous to life. They have all been dressed either at a Field Dressing Station or at a Casualty Clearing Hospital.

They are put on an ordinary train in the charge of one Medical Officer, who has with him a staff of R.A.M.C. orderlies. The train is rationed, and it is sent off on its journey. This journey may take many hours, and in order to give the men a chance of a hot drink and, where necessary, of having their wounds re-dressed, Rest Stations have been set up at various junctions, where the train can halt for something under an hour and the men receive attention.

Perhaps it would be wrong to say that the Rest Station work in France is the pride of the V.A.D. Headquarters Staff, because it is invidious to pick out any one kind of work and say that it is better than another; but it is true that the members who work on French railway Rest Stations have had to cope with emergencies, improvise all sorts of articles almost out of nothing, meet unheard-of difficulties with calmness and promptness, and have lived under harder conditions, perhaps, than any others who are at work in France.

*The First Unit to Go Abroad.*

It was on October 16th, 1914, that a Unit, composed of sixteen members and two trained nurses drawn from Voluntary Aid Detachments, was mobilized for foreign service, and went out under the charge of Mrs. Furse. First of all the Unit was sent to Paris, and then it was returned to Boulogne, one more trained nurse and two members being added to its strength.

Accommodation in the town was extremely difficult to find, and on October 26th the Unit took over three French wagons and two passenger carriages, turning them into a dispensary, a kitchen, and a Quartermaster's store, the members themselves doing all the necessary scrubbing, cleaning, and painting. This was no light task, as can be imagined when you remember the condition in which French railway wagons are likely to be.

Within twenty-four hours one thousand wounded men had been fed, the cooks having only three small alcohol stoves with which to work. Into this one sentence is compressed a long and wonderful story of what can be done by a devoted band of women. Perhaps to the reader it does not sound very much; but turn your mind for one moment to what really must have happened during those twenty-four hours.

It could not have been easy to get the food, to begin with. Utensils would be scarce; the heating

of enormous quantities of water on three small alcohol stoves presents a difficulty in itself which would appall many of us. It was October, and the weather would not be too warm; and the amount of physical exertion in running about collecting the necessary equipment, and then of distributing the food to one thousand wounded men, would be strenuous, to say the least of it.

"In order to cope adequately with the great volume of work, stoves were fitted into the wagons during the following days, and various shelves and cupboards were put up by the members."

That is as the official report puts it; but as a matter of fact those wagons were turned into really charming rooms, bright with clean white paint, gleaming tin utensils, and even with comfortable chairs made out of barrels. It was, in fact, a triumph of improvisation.

As though they had not already got their hands sufficiently full, the R.T.O. (Railway Transport Officer) asked the Unit if it could billet nightly any sick men requiring shelter. The work was undertaken immediately, and the men were put into railway carriages whenever they needed accommodation for the night.

After working for one week an abnormal number of wounded began to arrive, and on Monday, November 2nd, the resources of the Unit were taxed to the utmost, 2,300 wounded being fed dur-

ing the day, and over 200 dressings being done in the wagons by the Sisters with the help of two members and three other trained nurses who had been hastily called for the emergency.

The authorities saw that more facilities must be given for the work, and on the following day two more wagons were supplied, one to act as a reserve store and one for the use of the staff, and a general Dressing Station was erected by the platform. The sanitary arrangements were improved, and a motor Ambulance was put at the disposal of the Unit, one of the members being appointed as driver.

*Boy Orderlies.*

Eight boy orderlies from an East Lancashire V.A.D. were attached to this Unit, with an orderly Superintendent and two orderly Quartermasters, and proved themselves to be of invaluable assistance.

During those first weeks the Unit seems to have gone out of its way to look for work, although it must have been overwhelmed by it already. It took in, sorted, and distributed hundreds of magazines biweekly to fourteen Hospitals. It undertook to make sand-bags, bandages and pad splints for many of the Military Hospitals, which were then in urgent need of these things, as the War Depots at home had not got into full going order. Ever since then a very large number of dressings

and padded splints have been turned out by the members of the Boulogne Rest Station.

The food which was supplied to the wounded consisted of soup, cocoa, bread and butter, ham, cheese, chocolate, apples and bananas. Hundreds of medical and surgical cases have been dealt with by the Sisters, and the one Ambulance attached to the Unit has conveyed a huge number of cases to and from Hospitals.

At Christmas time presents were given to every one of the men travelling on Ambulance trains, and thousands of cigarettes and papers were distributed. A very large number of sick men have been billeted on the Unit for single nights, and have been fed and, where necessary, given skilled nursing.

Members who go out to France as V.A.D. members are expected to take things as they find them, and to make the best of everything. Discipline is strict, and they are not allowed to question the decision of those in authority. A girl may be put into the kitchen and do nothing but cut up vegetables or washing-up for weeks together. There is a sigh of contentment from the members who are lucky enough to be put "on the trains," as it is called, when they actually help in the feeding or the dressing of the wounded men; but they are far too well disciplined to make any remark as to their private wishes on the subject.

This little party of pioneers set the pace, as it were, in the matter of discipline, and it has been nobly upheld by all those who have followed in their footsteps.

*Thousands of Dressings.*

This first Rest Station is still in existence, and an enormous amount of work has been carried through since the new push began in July, 1916. Some rooms in the station have been given up by the railway authorities, and the V.A.D. members have turned them into a delightful suite for Ambulance work.

There is a kitchen, where several members cook meals for non-combatant men, such as R.A.M.C. orderlies, who are sent down to the station on various kinds of work, and may have to spend many hours there. The dispensary is most beautifully fitted up with bright dressing tins and one or two beds, whilst the store beyond is filled with all the necessary foodstuffs used for the wounded men.

Great ingenuity has been used by these members in making the best of everything. One of them, who is a clever carpenter, has evolved a most useful truck for the carrying of supplies along the platform for the trains; whilst several other members have learnt the art of soldering, and constantly turn condensed milk tins into admirable mugs.

The V.A.D. members who come out from England are very often put into this Rest Station for a week or two to obtain a short training for whatever kind of work they may eventually have to do in France.

The Rest Station is never closed night or day, some of the members always being on duty; and it is very often in the night hours that the biggest rushes occur. Numbers may not be given, but absolutely thousands of dressings have been carried out here (under the direction of M.O. and trained nurse), and tens of thousands of wounded men have been fed.

*The Opening of More Rest Stations.*

The Military authorities expressed themselves as being exceedingly pleased with the work that had been done at the Boulogne Rest Station, and they requested that other Stations should be opened on the Lines of Communication.

In England comparatively few people seem to understand what these Lines mean, but in France everybody realises that the "L. of C." are something of great Military importance. They are, in fact, the railway lines which run from the Bases to the Front.

There are at the present moment several of these Rest Stations (or Aid Posts, as they are sometimes called) in full working order at various spots on the Lines. The members who work at

Lady District Officer. Commandant of a V.A.D. has the same uniform, except the belt is white instead of black.

each one form a complete Unit with a Commandant in charge.

In many ways the work at these Rest Stations is more akin to that which the Army nurses experience at a Casualty Clearing Hospital close behind the firing line than anything else. However hard the work may be at a Hospital at or near a Base, the staff usually has all necessary utensils supplied to it, and a certain amount of personal comfort is provided for them.

The members at a Rest Station have to live somewhere near their work, going to and from the Station at all hours of the day and night. A railway station is likely to be an extremely draughty, cold and damp place during the winter months, and the members have to contend with a great deal of dirt coming from the railway engines.

At a very large railway junction in France the second Rest Station was established by a devoted little party of V.A.D. workers. The four V.A.D. members and four orderlies were shown a goods shed and told that that was to be their Headquarters. It was a dreary-looking place, extremely dirty, and part of it was cut off from another shed by a drooping canvas curtain.

The Commandant-in-charge, a most excellent worker, who has since been honoured by being Mentioned in Despatches, set to work, and in a

very few hours the place was tidy and suitable for the reception of wounded men.

There were a certain number of Sawyer stoves close by, where tea or cocoa could be made for the supply of the men in the improvised Ambulance trains, and all the cases that could walk came into the Ambulance room for re-dressing by the trained Sister.

*Smart Work.*

There was something almost occult about the premonition which assailed the Commandant one chilly evening when she refused to go home and leave her Second-in-command in charge for the night. She said she felt sure that "something was going to happen." They waited until the early hours of the morning, and things were still absolutely peaceful, so that she began to think her premonition was all nonsense.

Suddenly there came a message that three improvised Ambulance trains would be coming into the station in a couple of hours, but that a change of traffic arrangements had necessitated their being sent in on a line far away from the Rest Station room. This particular railway station is a huge one, resembling Waterloo or Victoria, and it would be quite impossible to carry food and drink across all the lines to the train.

There was only one thing to be done. The entire Rest Station must be shifted. History does

not record what the orderlies or the juniors of the Unit thought when the Commandant calmly announced her intention that the Aid Post, root and branch, must be transplanted to the other side of the station. But this is where discipline comes in triumphantly. There was not a murmur of dissent, but, on the other hand, a glad acquiescence.

There is something peculiarly exhilarating in taking part in a quick change. The railway authorities gave them the use of a large shed which stood at siding close to the line where the trains would come in. Luckily it was in a fairly clean condition, and with an extra run round with a brush and pail of water it was quite habitable.

All the equipment, which had been improvised out of biscuit tins, kerosene tins, barrels and boxes of every shape and kind, was put on to lorries and trundled across the lines. Tables and benches were set up in position, and ration box cupboards were placed against the walls of the shed. The orderlies managed to move the Sawyer stoves and to get them alight, and within a couple of hours no one could have guessed that the Aid Post had not existed in that particular spot for the last year or so.

It was a magnificent piece of generalship, worthy of the highest military ability. The railway authorities were candidly amazed at what had

been done, for it seemed little less than miraculous.

When the three improvised Ambulance trains steamed into the station, one after the other, the little Unit of V.A.D. workers, looking calm and dainty in their clean uniforms, was ready to serve out steaming cocoa and food to the men and, under the supervision of trained nurses, to help with some hundreds of dressings.

It was an achievement that should go down in the annals of the history of V.A.D. work, typical of many other instances of the same kind which cannot be mentioned here, but showing that women can rise to an emergency and acquit themselves creditably.

It was at this Rest Station that the members had cleverly made old kerosene cans into dirty dressing utensils. They had cut lids out of wood, putting rope handles on to them, and fitting them to a nicety. Biscuit tins had been sterilized and brightened into the likeness of mirrors, and large bottles had been obtained for the contents of various lotions.

Everything was beautifully marked in plain red lettering, and the exquisite tidiness of the place, the whiteness of the boards, the artistic charm of big bowls filled with flowers, gave one a sense of rest and welcome.

It was discovered that the Sisters on the regular Ambulance trains experienced great difficulty

in getting their linen washed and returned to them, as they never knew whether their trains would stop for more than an hour at a time.

The Unit at this big Rest Station, knowing that every Ambulance train halted there on every one of its journeys, offered to take in the soiled linen of the Sisters, get it washed and counted, and made into parcels ready for them on their return journey.

This has been a bigger work than would appear, and the proportionate amount of comfort it has brought to the hard-worked Sisters is extraordinary; for life on an Ambulance train is more exciting than comfortable, and it is no small matter to have the added discomfort of not being able to get clean linen.

Another outside job which is undertaken by the Unit is the keeping of a library of books, which are lent to the numbers of Tommies who are stationed round about the junction. In their spare time, of course, the girls make bandages and swabs for the neighboring Hospitals; and tobacco and cigarettes are kept for the supply of soldiers and sailors.

*A Tiny Unit in an Out-of-the-Way Spot.*

Another of these rest stations was established on an important junction of railway lines, but in a very out-of-the-way French village, where there was only one tiny *epicerie* and one little hotel.

The Unit that was put here was a particularly small one, there being only the Commandant and one junior, with four orderlies.

The doctor attached to the station had a very long round and could not be there constantly; and a trained Sister was only sent down during the big rushes; for these highly skilled women are far too valuable to be employed at places where they may have many weeks of slack times so far as wounded are concerned.

In these cases the Commandant who is put in is a woman of experience, who, though not fully trained in the sense of having had three years' consecutive Hospital training, has spent a great deal of time actually in Hospital work, and is thoroughly capable of dealing with accidents.

Many of the older and more experienced members are quite equal, so the doctors say, to nurses who have had at least a two years' training, and it is these women who are put into the important posts where they have a good deal of responsibility on their shoulders.

The raw V.A.D., who has taken her certificates since the war began, is excellent as a worker under close supervision; but it would be well if people did not run away with the idea that because a woman is a member of a V.A.D. Detachment she must be very much an amateur in the matter of nursing.

I am simply pointing this out so that people

may not imagine for one moment that our wounded men are ever left in the hands of unskilled people, for that is never the case. The Military authorities inspect the Rest Stations constantly and ask the Commandants all sorts of searching questions.

On a beautiful summer afternoon the Commandant of one of the Rest Stations had allowed her junior and some of her orderlies to be off duty for an hour or two, and she herself was calmly writing letters home, when an important man of high rank in military circles suddenly walked into the Rest Station and made a close examination of everything there. He opened cupboards, he looked into dressing tins, he enquired closely into the commissariat arrangements, and he asked a hundred questions as to what would be done if certain circumstances arose.

"Suppose you had an air raid here," he said; "what arrangements have you made for dealing with the wounded? You have only one bed here."

"I have arranged," said the Commandant, "to have the use of an Army store opposite the station, and I can count on from thirty to forty mattresses which could be put into the store within a few minutes. We have hundreds of dressings ready cut up, and stores of lotions. We have plenty of candles handy if there should be no other light. We have tried to think out a plan that would cope with every emergency."

"Suppose, on the other hand," said the genial Army Inspector, "that, instead of having one or two improvised Ambulance trains, there arrived twice or three times as many. What would you do for food for them?"

"We have arranged with the Army Service Supply Unit," was the prompt reply. "We cannot store the food here, but it is all ready across the road, and the men know that we might need it at any moment of the day or night."

That is the kind of incident that is constantly happening, and I quote the little scene about which I was told in order to show what a close eye the Army keeps upon these voluntary workers.

*Jobs.*

V.A.D. members are fond of taking on and carrying out all sorts of jobs which do not strictly belong to Red Cross work. They have to remember the laws of the Geneva Convention, and do not do any work for combatants in their duty time, nor spend any Red Cross funds upon them; but there is nothing to prevent a V.A.D. member from spending her leisure time in holding out a kindly hand to the men who are making such a magnificent fight for King and country.

For instance, it was found at one of the Rest Stations that the men on a troop train which went through there every evening were very often parched with thirst during the hot nights. Hence-

forward cans of cold water were placed at intervals all along the platform, and V.A.D. members gave drinks to the men or filled their water-bottles.

As the autumn came on and the nights grew chilly the cold water was exchanged for boiling water, and the dry tea carried by the men was turned into a hot drink, to their great delight.

Picture for yourselves a long troop train in the station on a pitch-dark night with rain falling fast, or a clear, crisp night with several inches of snow lying upon the platform. The men, with their heads encased in the woollen helmets which they love, hang in little clusters out of the windows of the train, and directly they catch the words, "Boiling water, boiling water," shouted by an orderly, fumble for their canteens, throw in a handful of tea, and eagerly hold the can out for one of the Red Cross workers to fill it with boiling water.

It is not only the hot drink that cheers them on, but it is the thought and the kindliness and the cheery word which gives these men, who are then getting very near to the firing line, a last glimpse of English womanhood, and of the love which lies in the hearts of all true women for their dear fighting men.

Many a time a train filled with Indian troops has halted at this station, and the Indians have gladly accepted cold water, in spite of their old

traditions, from the English nurses; and then, seizing their hands to shake, have said in their broken English, "I fight for the King."

*A Tiny Canteen.*

Another of the odd jobs was the running of a canteen at one of these Rest Stations for the British Tommies stationed there. This again they had to do quite unofficially.

It is mentioned, however, to show that V.A.D. workers are not like the traditional servant who says, "I was not engaged to do so and so." Theirs is precisely the opposite point of view.

They go out first of all to attend to the sick and the wounded, but directly they are not occupied in this direction they look around and see what else there is to be done, and they do it with all their heart and with all their soul.

A little shed was set up in a waste strip of ground close to the station, and was equipped with tables and benches, stoves and cooking utensils; and the girls used to take it in turns to get up early in the morning and go down to make the men a comfortable breakfast, men who had been travelling all night with wounded horses and were greatly in need of a little kindly care.

It was pathetic to see how these men appreciated having a talk with an English woman, and perhaps it is not too much to say that the women who minister to the minds of the men who are

cut off from their homes and from their own women folk are not doing a less "great" job than when they are attending to the men who have been broken in battle.

No one who has not lived on the Lines of Communication can quite understand the loneliness of our men who are stationed there. A French village offers but little entertainment save by its cafés. Occasionally there comes a Lena Ashwell concert party, and there is exceeding joy, for the pleasure which these parties have brought into the lives of the men behind the lines cannot be measured in words. That, however, is a rare occurrence, especially for the men who are stationed in a tiny village where there are no big camps.

It is impossible to give any idea of the queer tasks which the large-hearted V.A.D. members undertake in these Outposts. They do the mending for the men; in one case they do the soldering for the little Hospital near by. They are the recipients of all sorts of sad stories, and they help to pull many a man out of a scrape. In some cases they manage small recreation huts for the men.

"You are as good as a mother to us," said a lad who had come from a good home, but had fallen amongst evil companions, and was rapidly dropping into bad ways when he was suddenly brought back to his original level by the kindly

interest shown in him by a V.A.D. member who was on the wrong side of thirty.

A private, crouching miserably against the wall of the station on a wild, wet night in winter, was approached by a V.A.D. member. He told her quite frankly that he was a prisoner, and was returning after having undergone twenty-eight days' field punishment. His guard, knowing that the man was too cowed to try and escape, and having money in his pocket, had gaily gone up the village street to the *estaminet* to get a drink; but the wretched prisoner had not a *sou* in the world, and had somehow missed the rations which should have been given to him.

He was taken into the warm, lamp-lit room and given a good square meal. The hot tea put new life into him, and gradually the food began to make him something of a man and less of a coward. He told his story to the nurses, and vowed that he would never run the risk of getting such a punishment again.

He still had a long journey to go that night before he got back to his own camp, and it was some time before his guard returned to look after him.

These are the things that a woman may do by the dozen when she has the proud privilege of working on the L. of C. in France. Such stories could be multiplied by the hundred, but this one only is given so that some sort of glimpse may be gained of the extra work, as it were, which

is being faithfully carried out, and which is seldom spoken of by V.A.D. members.

*First Aid in a Hurry.*

At all the Rest Stations injuries are constantly attended to for the soldiers of the Allied Armies; for wherever great numbers of troops are travelling by train there naturally must occur all sorts of accidents.

"First Aid in a hurry," it was called by one Commandant, who devised an emergency basket in which she kept every kind of dressing and all necessary utensils.

A troop train would be standing in the station, when perhaps the door of the Ambulance room would fly open and someone would announce in French or English that there was an accident on the train. The basket would be caught up in one hand, and a kettle of boiling water in the other, and within one minute the nurse would be in the railway carriage attending to the injured man.

Very often it was only a minor accident which might easily develop into a serious injury if left uncovered, and in that case it was dressed, and as the train was signalled to go the nurse would leap out on to the platform and smile her goodbyes to her patient and his comrades.

On the other hand, if a man were seriously hurt he would be brought into the Ambulance room and

put upon the bed and kept there until he had been seen by the Medical Officer, who would send him down to the Base on an Ambulance. Very often patients are kept all night in these Rest Stations, men who are taken off the troop trains suffering from illness or from accident. Soldiers of the Allied Armies, of course, are attended to equally with our own.

A curious thing happened one night in a Rest Station when a British soldier was brought in by the Medical Officer from a train, who said that the man was suffering from a broken leg. Within five minutes a French soldier was brought in also with a broken leg! The French and Flemish soldiers have First Aid rendered and are then dispatched to their own Military Hospitals.

The one predominant feature of Rest Station work is the necessity of being ready instantaneously for anything that may happen. The door is flung open and a man is brought in suffering from a cut on the scalp caused by the falling of a rifle from the rack. It is only a superficial wound, but it must be dressed. The train can only remain in the station five minutes, and the man must go on with it when it leaves.

There is no bustle, but the hair is cut away carefully from the neighborhood of the wound, which is thoroughly washed and bound up. The man is escorted back to his carriage by an orderly, well within the five minutes.

A young officer, who had been on Salisbury Plain during the hot weather, and had not taken any notice of the fact that his eyes had become inflamed with the dust, went out to France, and at Havre managed to get more grit into his eyes during a gust of wind. On his way up in the train to the Front a M.O. noticed the condition of his eyes, and having done the journey several times before, was well aware of the fact that these Rest Stations existed *en route*.

At the next one he took the young officer with him to the Ambulance room and asked for the ophthalmic case which is in every Army Field Pannier. There was no spare time, as the train might go on at any moment. The V.A.D. member produced the ophthalmic case instantaneously, and the M.O. put a certain drug, which would reduce the inflammation, into the officer's eyes.

It had to be done by the light of a lamp, and it was not an easy operation to do under such hurried circumstances; but it was done successfully, and at the moment the train began to move the M.O. and the officer sprang into their carriage.

That is the everyday life of the members who are stationed at an Aid Post; but the routine is roughly broken into by the work for which they were placed there—the attending to wounded men who come down in the improvised Ambulance trains.

*A Big Push and Its Work.*

When there is a big push on the members work day and night. Thousands of gallons of cocoa are made; hundreds of loaves of bread are cut up, and jugs upon jugs full of beef essence or a milky drink are distributed, whilst wounds are redressed by the hundred.

At one of the Rest Stations it was found that the improvised Ambulance trains always came in at a platform which was several lines away from the Ambulance room. The row of Sawyer stoves had been set upon the platform where the trains rested, but everything else had to be carried across from the room, and this always had to be done in plenty of time to avoid the possibility of there being goods trains on the lines between the room and the "cocoa platform," as it came to be called.

A complete set of bottles containing lotions was made and kept in a box, whilst certain biscuit tins, sterilized and filled with dressings, were kept untouched, ready for the arrival of a train. Chairs, tables, lamps, mackintoshes, a small sterilizer, cans of boiling water, basins, washing materials and all the other paraphernalia of a dressing station used to be carried across the lines to the glass shelter, where they were set up in orderly array.

Everything was kept closely covered, and when it came to the moment for the men to have their

Nursing Sister's and V.A.D.
member's indoor dress.

wounds dressed everything possible was done to keep them sterile, and of course only wounds that were urgently needing re-dressing were actually undone. Everything was done by the order of the Medical Officer on the train.

The serving out of the cocoa and food was systematized, so that the thousand-odd men each received his quantum in due course, there being left no loophole by which a man might be missed over. Eighty gallons of cocoa were made for each train-load of wounded men; and when it is remembered that on one occasion only half an hour's notice of the coming of a train was given to the Unit, and yet that every man had his hot drink when he arrived, perhaps it is not too much to say that the Rest Station workers have not been altogether a failure.

Of the courage of the men who come down in these improvised trains one would like to say just a word, since the people in England, sympathetic though they are, can have no real conception of what things are like out in France.

It is no unusual sight to see mud-stains up to the men's waists, or to have a man come into one's hands for the dressing of a wound without a whole garment upon him. When the men have been through barbed wire they come down literally with their clothes torn off them; and it has been known for a V.A.D. member, whilst pinning the remnants together with safety pins, to ask

which particular article of attire it was she was handling.

Optimistic, courageous under their sufferings, unselfish in the extreme, the men are never heard to grumble at their hard lot, but will always try to induce the nurse to "Oh, do him, Sister; he is worse than I am."

Their gratitude is out of all proportion to the service rendered. Many a time a V.A.D. member has had to choke back her tears when words of thankfulness have been brokenly uttered by the wounded men. In reply she would say, "It is nothing to what you have done for us. If you had not put up such a fine fight we should have been in the same position as the poor women are to-day in Lille and the Belgian towns."

It is difficult to leave the subject of Rest Station work, for there is a great deal to be said about it. It has a fascination all its own, because it does not run on the regular lines laid down by Hospital work. It leaves many an opening for the woman who has imagination and ingenuity and capacity. It gives her an opportunity of using her hands and her brain. The woman who can do a bit of amateur carpentering and upholstering is as invaluable at a Rest Station as the one who can play an accompaniment at sight or by ear, or can turn her hand to laundry work or cooking.

Officers as well as men very often are attended

to at Rest Stations, for it frequently happens that they suffer minor injuries or become ill whilst on the long journeys in France, and then it is that they turn thankfully to the bare Station rooms which have been touched into homeliness by the women of their own country.

There are many sides to the life of a Rest Station, and it is as well that most of the people who are connected with them seem to have an abundant sense of humor. They are brought so much up against the tragedies of war that life would be well-nigh impossible if they did not get some relief.

At one of the Rest Stations it happened that an officer, who had had to get down from his train, was horrified to see it on the move, and in trying to catch it slipped from the footboard and fell into a huge heap of soot. It probably saved his life, but the soot was of such an affectionate nature that it effectually hid his identity, and when he was picked up in a semi-conscious condition and carried into the Rest Station in the gloom of night it was thought that he belonged to the coloured race.

He had suffered a slight scalp wound, which was attended to immediately, and his clothes were so completely smothered with the soot that they were gingerly removed by an orderly and taken away, who folded them together without disturbing them, so as to prevent the smuts from flying about.

Imagine the astonishment of the nurses when they came to wash the man's face and hands and found that he was white! They were still, however, under the impression that he was a Tommy, and were not a little dismayed when the orderly came in the morning and said that he had been cleaning the clothes and had discovered that the patient was an officer.

It seems that after he had regained consciousness he heard somebody say that they thought he was a coloured man, and he was so indignant that he made up his mind not to speak. It is possible that his temper was not improved by being treated as a Tommy by the orderly!

In the morning, however, he had regained his sense of humour and laughed heartily at the whole thing. He was very grateful for the attention he had received and never failed to call upon the members when he happened to be passing through that particular Station.

It is impossible to give any adequate notion of the widely different bits of work that are undertaken by Rest Station members. They hold out a helping hand at the crucial moment, and the only unsatisfactory part of the work is that they seldom hear the end of the story.

Occasionally news comes to them, as in the case of a man who was very terribly injured in a train accident, and whose life was saved by the prompt seizing of the arteries by a V.A.D. member. He

had to be taken down to the Base, and she says she will never forget the journey of thirty-odd miles over terribly bad roads; but he was got to the Hospital in fairly good condition, an operation was performed, and later on they heard that the man had been sent to England minus a hand, but otherwise perfectly well.

Perhaps a young officer who had some sort of help from a Rest Station put the thing into a nutshell when he quoted,

"Ships that pass in the night, speak one another in passing,
Only a signal shown—a distant voice in the darkness;
So on the Ocean of Life, we speak and pass one another,
Only a voice and a look, then darkness again and a silence."

It may be only a word or a cup of cold water, or it may be the saving of a life by skilled attention; but the loftiest ideals of V.A.D. work can be reached up to at any one of the Aid Posts, where the conditions of life are hard, where the members often live on Army rations and become veritably a bit of the Army, where they plod through snow and mud far up the "permanent way," taking big risks of getting caught by a train in the darkness of the night; but theirs is the privilege, the high honour of being allowed to follow in the footsteps of the ancient Knights of St. John, who took unto themselves the fine old Latin motto, "*Pro utilitate hominum.*"

## CHAPTER XVII

### Detention Hospitals in France.

A BIT of V.A.D. work which is very little known of by the general public is that which is admirably carried on in the small Detention Hospitals that lie behind the Lines of Communication. Civilians seem to have no understanding of how war is engineered from the back. They apparently often forget that the man in the firing line has to be fed and clothed and mounted by comrades who are gathered together in great camps between the Front and the ports.

It is a hard, dull life that is lived by these men, who are put down in out-of-the-way country districts, sometimes far from any town, where they have to contend with oceans of mud and all sorts of depressing conditions.

During this last winter, at one of the big camps, they have actually had to have boats out to get over the floods. That one remark conveys a whole history of miseries and discomforts to those who have lived amongst the men who work in these camps. Yet they are cheery and bright, though many of them may be heard to regret that they have been put behind the lines instead of up in the trenches.

Naturally sickness sometimes comes upon these men, and as they are all horse camps of one kind or another, there are very often accidents and injuries which necessitate skilled attention. It is for this purpose that the Detention Hospitals have been established. They are not intended for the wounded from the firing line.

At the moment of writing there are two of these Hospitals, one of them being run by a B.R.C.S. Unit and the other by a St. John Unit. In both cases commodious French villas were leased in small towns which were near several very large camps. The Hospitals thus serve some thousands of men, and are truly looked upon as havens of rest and joy.

Many elderly men are accepted for service in these camps, and during very wet weather they are apt to suffer from rheumatism or from bronchial troubles. Then there are accident cases and all sorts of minor ailments. The men may only be kept in these small Hospitals for a certain time, and if they are not recovered by then they are sent down to a Military Base Hospital.

The entire work of the Hospital is carried out by V.A.D. members. A Commandant is in charge of the staff and the housekeeping and general management of the Hospital, whilst there is a fully trained Sister in charge of the nursing members and the wards.

*Converting a French Villa into a Hospital.*

Difficulties of all sorts confronted the devoted little band of workers who descended upon a certain small French town not many months after the war had commenced. They had travelled for many miles in a motor lorry, and when they were deposited at the French villa they must have been somewhat dismayed to find it in a very filthy condition, but with a patient actually waiting on the doorstep for admission.

An Army doctor is attached to each Hospital, and in this case he gallantly turned to and helped the women members and orderlies to get the Hospital ship-shape. The patient was admitted at once, and within a few hours the wards were clean and straight and some sort of food had been served to everyone.

But imagine the scene which met the eye of the V.A.D. cook when she went into the kitchen at six o'clock the next morning. The place was dirty in the extreme, and there was no water to be got except by sending for it from the town pump. Everything was in the last stage of muddle and the stove refused to work.

Perhaps it is as well that history recordeth not what she said to herself at that moment, but be it to her credit that whatever her feelings were she kept them to herself and bravely set to work and evolved method out of muddle.

The tiny kitchen to-day is a model of neatness, with a nail for everything and everything on its nail. The same cook has toiled there day after day, year in and year out, and certainly has earned some special distinction, for she has cooked for the patients and for the staff and for the two chauffeurs, who come in and out at all times of the day, and yet always find a good hot meal awaiting them.

Many of the rooms in the house were repapered and whitewashed by the staff, and all sorts of clever contrivances have been put up to make the house, which must have been an exceedingly picturesque residence, into a fairly convenient Hospital.

Vegetables are grown in the little garden, and the many outhouses, in which the French people seem to rejoice, have been turned into a Pack-store, a vegetable store, an isolation ward and an extra recreation room for the convalescent men.

One of the V.A.D. members acts as housemaid, whilst the others are at work in the wards. It is a wonderfully happy little community of workers, who take the trials and the sudden emergencies which come along as part of the daily routine, in philosophical fashion.

At Christmas time wonderful parties are held for the patients, and it is odd how many men discover that they are suffering from some sort of

illness just at that particular moment and thereby are welcomed to the Christmas festivities.

*An Overflow of Patients.*

In the middle of a winter night the Commandant of the St. John Hospital sprang out of bed in answer to a violent ringing of the front-door bell. As it happened there had been no need to leave anyone on night duty, and the entire staff was peacefully sleeping when the summons came. Outside there was a motor car, and in it the doctor and a patient.

"But I have not got an empty bed," cried the Commandant in despair. "What are we to do?"

"You must make one," said the doctor calmly, as two orderlies brought in the laden stretcher. "This is a very serious accident which happened at one of the camps some miles away."

The solution to the problem was a simple one. A mattress was taken off the bed of one of the staff and put on the floor for a convalescent patient, whilst the seriously injured man was put into a bed in a single ward where he would be perfectly quiet.

*The Water Is Cut Off.*

Little trials such as having the water cut off from the main with only five minutes' notice may give the Commandant a nasty shock at first, but she becomes accustomed to it in the course of time.

It is nothing unusual to go into one of these Hospitals and see every kind of jug and basin standing on a table in the kitchen, filled to the brim and covered with papers. It means that the town authorities have given them short notice that the water will be cut off for the next twenty-four hours, and every sort of vessel has been pressed into service for the storage of water.

*Army Rations.*

Both patients and staff are fed on Army rations, and this fact does not add to the joys of the cook, for she very often has to wait for the arrival of the rations, and then they may not be in the least what she had expected. The food is exceedingly good and there is plenty of it, but no definite plans can be made early in the day as to of what the meals shall consist.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Motor V.A.D. Units in France.

HUNDREDS of strong men were being employed as Motor Ambulance drivers in France, and as the grip of war took deeper hold it became apparent that these men must be released for work in the trenches. Many a girl who was an expert motor driver had offered her services, but had been refused by the Military authorities; but when the necessity arose for the men drivers to be released it came about that women were gladly accepted, and the Joint Committee was asked to form two Motor Ambulance Units which would work in different districts in France.

It was one of the many experiments which have been tried by the Joint Committee, and it is satisfactory to know that scarcely any few of them have proved failures. The members of the Unit not only drive the Ambulances, but do all the running repairs and clean the cars. In some cases a girl will drive as many as a hundred and fifty miles a day.

A fine idea of the work is given by the Commandant in her report:

"We are a Convoy of thirty-seven Ambulances, one small lorry, and one workshop, with a staff of

forty V.A.D. members, one orderly, four mechanics, and one man officer, called Transport Officer. Our Ambulances deal with stretcher cases chiefly, as buses still run for sitting cases; but we also do lots of odd jobs.

"We feel that it is a great honour for our girls to be allowed to drive at funerals, though it is very trying work when the relatives sit on the front seat of the Ambulances."

The girls do all the work on their cars exactly as men do, cleaning, oiling and greasing them, and changing tires; but they do not do adjustments, as the men on Convoys are not allowed to do that either. Our girls drive very carefully and well, and they are exceedingly popular with the French people, who are not afraid of their children and dogs being run over by them.

In a Motor Unit roll call is at 7.30 A.M., at which all the girls must be present, even though they may have been out driving part of the night. They work on their cars, except for an interval for breakfast, till 10.30 A.M., when the Commandant holds engine inspection.

The Convoy is divided into two sections, with a Section Leader and Sub-Section Leader to each. One Section does all the odd driving for the day, whilst the other Section provides all the orderlies who have to do the cleaning duties in the house. The Sections alternate their duties day by day. For Convoys or evacuations the whole strength

of the Unit is out, with the exception of three girls who have to be left to do the orderly work.

It is not a popular job to be put as assistant to one of the three V.A.D. cooks, but it has to be done, and as it is taken in turns by the entire Unit there is a long space in between the duty for each girl.

The Military authorities have intimated their satisfaction at the way the work is being carried out, and certainly it is not easy to keep up with all the demands. Every now and then little contretemps occur, such as when the girls oversleep themselves and have to jump into oilskins and long leather boots and drive off at the very last moment.

The day's routine in a Motor Unit is something after this style: A girl gets down at 7.30 and goes straight to her car. She has breakfast and finishes the cleaning of her engine for the inspection of her officer. Her Section Leader then tells her to be ready for the next call, and directly the whistle goes she mounts and is off.

On her return she cleans her cubicle, and perhaps has to mend a punctured tire, which means an hour or more of hard work. She is not allowed to leave her car until it is in perfect order for the road.

After lunch she probably goes and plays tennis or takes a rest; but she has to "stand by," for an Evacuation may have been ordered at 6 P.M.

By that time she will have blankets in her car, and the stretcher racks down with stretchers upon them. The cars all line up, and at a given signal go off to their destinations. The girls sign on and off before and after every journey for Evacuation or Convoy.

Both the Motor Units are run on the same principle, and every day sees an increase in their work, for it is very evident that they fill a much needed want and are perfectly equal to any emergency.

It is a fine arm of V.A.D. work in France, and the Commandants are well deserving of high praise, to say nothing of the individual members, who drive their cars over roads which are not in too good a condition, who face all sorts of weather conditions, and who very often are called up at night and get no chance of making up their hours of sleep during the day.

It is a hard life, but has its many compensations, for the woman who really loves her car will tell you that there is an all-powerful allurement about driving it, and the difficulties of the circumstances add to rather than detract from the fascination of the work.

Above and beyond all, these women have the satisfaction of knowing that whilst they cannot fight themselves, they have actually given men to the Army, whilst they themselves are doing the merciful work of convoying the wounded and the sick.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Hostels in France.

THE big Hotel at Boulogne, which was taken over by the Joint Committee as Headquarters, is entirely staffed by V.A.D. members, who cook, sweep, do house and parlour work without complaint, knowing that they are saving the Societies hundreds of pounds which may be spent on the sick and wounded.

Self-sacrificing indeed is the work of this little army of V.A.D. members, who never come into direct contact with any wounded or sick man, but who simply cook and clean for the staff who are administering the great work of the two Societies in France.

There is a Commandant in charge of the members, and by her economical management she has effected a very large saving on the cost of the upkeep of Headquarters. The administration of huge sums of money such as pass through the hands of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and St. John is bound to be very heavy; but a sharp eye is kept on every detail, and accounts are closely looked into by those in authority.

Every Unit has to keep a minute account of its expenditure and make a regular return, together with a report of the work that has been done. This is all condensed and put into a summary which is sent round regularly to all the Units, so that each one can see exactly what is going on in other Units.

The keeping of these accounts is no small part of each Commandant's duty. At first some of them are bewildered by having to keep them in French money, but they very soon become enamoured of the metric system.

Hostels for the nursing staff of the Hospitals also are run by V.A.D. staffs in several districts, and three Hostels for relations of the wounded are also staffed in the same way.

In the Military Hospitals in France V.A.D. members are not only to be found in the wards as probationers, but they act as orderlies in the kitchens and in the linen-rooms, and thus they liberate hundreds of healthy men for the firing line.

*Nurses' Clubs.*

Three Clubs for nurses have been established and are entirely staffed by V.A.D. members, and in several cases the gardens also are cared for by them.

In one of the Hospitals, which is very close to the Front, the cooks who are in charge of the

kitchen have French women working under them, and this arrangement seems to be most satisfactory. In this particular Hospital there is a dug-out, in which refuge can be taken during bombardment or aerial attack. This is mentioned to show that many V.A.D. members are risking their lives whilst carrying on their unostentatious work.

"We are quite used to being bombed from enemy aeroplanes," said a V.A.D. nurse who was working in an Anglo-Belgian Hospital not far from the frontier. "The regularity with which the Germans fly over the town and drop bombs is astonishing. We are so accustomed to it that we scarcely take any notice of it, and, as a matter of fact, very little damage has been done by them and they have never yet got anything of Military importance. They have even reached us with their shells from guns, but no one in the town is frightened, and we go about our work quite calmly. It really is funny how one can get used to anything."

So much for the effect of German frightfulness!

*Barges as Hospitals.*

Very little has been written about a barge which has been converted into a Hospital for the use of the civilian population and is moored in a certain Belgian canal. A couple of V.A.D. members work there, under the supervision of a trained Sister.

*Confidential Work.*

In one of the big French towns several V.A.D. members are doing confidential work under the Military authorities. They are proving themselves to be thoroughly efficient and trustworthy in every way.

At one of the Rest Clubs for nurses the members sleep in tents on the sand-dunes outside the Club house, and considering that they have no means of transport and have to get all their milk and eggs from a village two miles away, it is not too much to say that the work is fairly strenuous. Winter and summer they have carried out this work, which probably demands as much unselfishness as any other in France. They have created a small garden in the sand, which gives a delightful patch of colour, for in it they grow nasturtiums, mignonette, and heliotrope.

*Joint Committee Post Office.*

It is comparatively a new development for the Joint Committee Post Office to be managed by a V.A.D. Unit, but it is a venture which has succeeded very well indeed. The Office is clean and tidy and the members look smart and happy. Attached to the Post Office is a postal van which is driven by a V.A.D. member. She generally drives about sixty miles a day, delivering letters, newspapers, etc., to the various Joint Committee formations in the district.

At the V.A.D. Club for Sisters and Military V.A.D. members one worker, who has been in charge for many months, has shown great devotion and unselfishness. Through her work dozens of tired nurses off Ambulance trains and out of Hospitals have had restful and happy times in the Club.

It has been truly said of V.A.D. members that no job is too small for them to undertake, and no gap is too large for them to fill. They are perpetually adding to their branches of work and constantly devising new schemes for the advance of their work.

For example, during the big pushes it happens that improvised Ambulance trains come in one close upon the heels of the other, and it is exceedingly difficult, almost impossible at times, to make a sufficient quantity of cocoa for the wounded men. With characteristic ingenuity, the V.A.D. members have now devised enormous hay boxes, in which they keep large cauldrons full of cocoa or tea hot for hours during a rush, when they do not know whether hundreds or thousands of wounded will need food.

The house members in the Hostels also deserve great praise. They cheerfully do the cooking, house and pantry work, and many have admitted that they will "understand things better" in their own homes in future. Complaints are rare, and the whole spirit of the V.A.D. members in France

might well be taken as an example to many of the girls at home.

The rules and regulations are very strict, and there is but little entertainment. War conditions prevail everywhere, and the members show a fine sense of honour in obeying the spirit of the law rather than the letter. They rise early, work hard all day, and they go to bed in cubicles which before the war would not have been offered to the lowliest of domestic servants.

*Red Cross Stores.*

The first Red Cross Stores to be established in France were opened by Mrs. Clipperton, the wife of the Consul-General of Rouen. The necessities of the Hospitals in France during the early months of the war far exceeded the supplies, and it was a heart-rending matter for Mrs. Clipperton to try to send consignments of goods that would at all meet with the needs. Words cannot express how she worked in order to gather together the equipment which was constantly being demanded by Matrons of Hospitals, but by her marvellous energy and her wonderful personality she effected that which might have seemed to be impossible.

After a time some very fine premises in a central position in Rouen were put at her disposal, and they may well be looked upon as model Red Cross Stores.

Everything is worked on a thoroughly business

basis, and requisitions have to be made out on forms by Commandants or Matrons before anything is allowed to leave the Stores. Requisitions are packed and dispatched with the utmost promptitude, a motor lorry being kept for the purpose of sending the goods to the various Units which are situated on the outskirts of the district served by the Rouen Red Cross Stores.

Here again we must speak of the Stores as being typical of many others which exist, but as they were the first to be got into working order, it is only just to describe them rather than any others.

How Mr. Clipperton manages to spare time from his heavy official duties is always a marvel to those who know him; but his heart and soul are in Red Cross work, and he has never yet been known not to fulfil a demand that has been made upon him when it sprang out of the needs of our wounded.

Stores there are of every sort of article that can possibly be wanted in Red Cross work, and they are methodically arranged on shelves all round the big rooms over which Mrs. Clipperton presides. From china and enamel plates, cups, pots and pans, the eye is carried along to piles of under-garments, fascinating groups of invalid foods, and all kinds of household equipment. Tables and chairs even can be supplied by Mrs. Clipperton at very short notice, and when a big cupboard was begged for by the Commandant of a

Rest Station, who did not know what to do with the bandages she had to store for the big rush, a huge packing case was quickly converted into a cupboard, well finished, even to having a lock and key on it, and was dispatched at very short notice.

Mrs. Clipperton keeps a close eye on various branches of work outside the actual Stores. When the two little Detention Hospitals were first started she gave invaluable assistance in deciding what furniture should be put in and helped in making the curtains. When the Hostel was started for the accommodation of the relatives of wounded in Rouen the entire furnishing of the house fell to the lot of Mrs. Clipperton, who had a little band of V.A.D. members under her. The whole thing was done with great rapidity, and the house is quite charming and makes a comfortable refuge for the weary and sad people who come to see their stricken loved ones.

That is only one instance of many in which Mrs. Clipperton has been the moving spirit in starting Red Cross establishments, and latterly she had added to her own work by giving a helping hand to the Canadian Red Cross Organisation which is in Rouen.

As time goes on the work at her own Red Cross Stores grows heavier, but the system on which she works is admirable and everything goes smoothly. Only the Commandant of any Unit which is out in France can quite realise the help which is given

to her by Mr. and Mrs. Clipperton's ready assistance and kindly, genial interest.

*The Discretion of V.A.D. Members.*

The Military authorities have long since realised that women can be trusted in the zone of the Armies; that they understand discipline and appreciate the necessity of discretion.

"Do you know to what place General Headquarters have been moved?" someone recently asked a V.A.D. member, lately returned from France.

"Yes, I know," she admitted.

"Then tell me," he begged. "I have a special reason for wanting to know."

"I cannot do that," said she staunchly. "I only got to know in the course of my work, and we never speak of Military matters."

That is the general aspect of the V.A.D. member. She can keep a secret, and has as high a sense of honour as her brother who is in the Army. The war, pitiful and horrible and costly in human life as it has been, has done a great deal for the manhood of the country, but perhaps it has done even more for its womanhood.

## CHAPTER XX

### V.A.D. Work in French Hospitals.

A LARGE number of English men and women have given their services ever since the commencement of the war in aid of French patients, and their labours have been intensely appreciated by the French nation.

It is curious that French people, with all their fine organisation and educational progress, should not have had regular training schools for nurses long ago. There are a few fully trained French nurses, but so few are they that one seldom meets them.

The three recognised Red Cross French Societies have done splendid work among the French wounded, and in a few instances the Red Cross Detachments were thoroughly well established long before the war, and have since shown themselves capable of doing the most excellent work; but the French people have been exceedingly thankful to accept the offer of assistance from us in their Hospitals, and there is no doubt that in a very large measure the Entente Cordiale has been enormously strengthened by the willing as-

sistance which has been given by English men and women to sick and wounded French soldiers.

*Hospitals in Monasteries.*

Many of the beautiful and historic Monasteries and Chateaux of France have been turned into Hospitals, and in not a few of them fully trained English nurses are in charge of the wards, sometimes working entirely under French doctors and sometimes under British doctors, and in one case at least both French and English doctors work amicably together with an English staff under them.

As I write there rises a picture in my mind's eye of a wonderful old Castle situated in a wooded part of Seine Inférieur. The two great castellated towers, built in grim grey stone, stand out boldly from the side of a hill, and are joined by an ancient wooden drawbridge, which stretches across a wide and very deep moat. From the drawbridge, up between the two towers, there springs a flight of circular steps, and on the sloping ground at either side there are curious-shaped flower beds, ablaze with geraniums and many gaudy blossoms.

The great door was thrown open and we were ushered into a long stone corridor, and eventually taken through the wards, filled with French soldiers. This was not a Military Hospital, but had been equipped and staffed by private endeavour,

Officer. Ordinary Member.

UNIFORMS FOR VOLUNTARY AID WORKERS.

and reflected great credit on the organisation of the French people who were at the head of it.

We were shown a very beautiful old painted chamber, and various other rooms filled with fine old furniture, which were carefully locked from general view.

*An Ancient Abbey.*

A fine Abbey not very far from the French firing line has been staffed almost entirely from the beginning of the war by English people, and in the Verdun district there are several big French Hospitals entirely run by British men and women.

It is interesting to know that in many cases the fully trained Sisters who are working amongst the French are Canadians and Australians, so that the Entente is spreading its influence far beyond the United Kingdom, and is stretching away to the furthest corners of our Greater Dominions.

Englishmen who are over military age or are physically unfit have been working in these Hospitals from the very beginning, and have proved themselves to be invaluable as orderlies. They have learned to become expert stretcher-bearers, they have driven motor Ambulances many times under fire, and they have carried out all the lowly work which falls to the lot of the men in a Hospital ward.

They labour under conditions much more diffi-

cult than those which prevail in the English Hospitals in France, because the sanitation is not as good, and the work entailed is extremely heavy in consequence. Highly cultured men are labouring in these Hospitals day and night, and find immense satisfaction in being of some assistance to the gallant French soldier.

They all tell the same story about the marvellous endurance of the Frenchman after he has been hit, and I have no difficulty in believing this, for I have seen many times for myself the magnificent courage of French wounded soldiers. If they are not as boisterously cheery as our own men, they are more philosophical and quite as patient.

Their gratitude is intense, and they are not ashamed of showing their emotion. To an English woman it is embarrassing when a soldier seizes her hands, kisses them and cries over them; but she cannot fail to be touched, because it is not all mere outward expression, but shows the real sentiment and gratitude which lie deep in the heart.

*Self-Sacrificing Labour.*

For pure self-sacrifice it would be hard to match the action of a young English V.A.D. member, who has for months on end worked for the best part of the day in a cellar at retrimming lamps. The lighting of these French Hospitals is one of the

difficulties which has to be faced, and every day someone has got to do the not too exhilarating task of trimming between one and two hundred lamps.

The cellar is cold and dark, the work is dirty and the life is lonely, but this brave young girl is dauntless, and laughed merrily when an orderly happened to descend to the cellar and was astonished to see her surrounded by a bewildering number of lamps.

We might quote dozens of such examples for self-sacrificing unobtrusive work which forms one of the cogs in the great wheel of war work. There is no glory and no fame, no excitement and certainly no sort of comfort in a job of this kind; but "somebody has got to do it; I may as well be that somebody as anyone else." A valiant spirit, and one which has made English people the real friends of France.

It is no unusual thing for the English people working in French Hospitals to be near enough to the line to be within range of the shells. One English woman, who had worked as a V.A.D. member in the Verdun district, said that they became expert in knowing the sound of the shells as they passed over their Hospital and fell in a village a mile away. They knew from the sound the size and the kind of shells that were being thrown.

The Hospital in which she was working has been established in a very beautiful old Château, and

it was said that the German artillerymen had been specially warned not to injure it because the Kaiser wished to make it a summer residence for one of his sons after the war!

The work in this Hospital was very hard because the patients came in direct from the trenches; but everything went exceedingly well, and the little band of English people seem to have been very happy there.

In the south of France a big school has been turned into a Hospital with five hundred beds, and in it a few English women started work in January, 1915, gradually adding to their numbers until there were about a dozen all told. With some devoted French women to assist them, two or three of them ran a section each of the Hospital with about eighty beds under their care.

The building was quite suitable for a Hospital, having very large dormitories and fair-sized classrooms which could be made into good wards. Although the Hospital was many miles from the Front the cases, which of course were not of the worst character, arrived in a most pitiable condition.

The English V.A.D. members were of various grades of experience, some of them being highly trained and others with but little knowledge of nursing. The orderlies were all untrained, but showed great willingness.

The experienced members felt it was a great re-

sponsibility to cope with the convoys of several hundreds of patients, but they always managed it excellently. The convoys generally came in at night, and in the dimly lit wards it was a hard task to get even the poor stumbling, tired stream of walking cases washed and comfortably put to bed. Each division of the Hospital had its own surgery in which all the dressings were done, which lightened the work and also made it possible for the dressings to be done under the most hygienic circumstances. The stretcher cases presented a good deal of difficulty in this direction, but the V.A.D. members were determined to keep everything up to a high standard, and they brought not only knowledge but hard work to bear on every department of the Hospital.

One of the V.A.D. members of this Hospital summed the feelings of herself and her comrades up in a few words when she wrote home: "If work is sometimes hard—as during the arrival of convoys, when we often have to do day and night shifts—all of us are ready to overcome even worse difficulties for the sake of the brave and ever-cheerful Poilu."

*British Ambulance Drivers on the French Front.*

A magnificent service has been rendered by many Englishmen as Motor Ambulance drivers. They have constantly taken their lives in their hands, for their work has carried them out almost

to the firing line, and certainly within reach of the heavy shells.

One needs to see as I have done the Motor Ambulances coming in, torn here and there by shrapnel, to realise in the slightest degree what it must mean to run over the fire-swept roads which lead from the Hospitals to the Clearing Stations. It is a thrilling sight to see a long stream of Ambulances wending its way down a French road, bearing its burden of broken manhood.

In a town which was at that time only fifteen miles from the firing line I had the opportunity of speaking to an American who had generously brought an Ambulance car over from the States and ran it out every night to fetch in French wounded. He said that there were many Englishmen doing this same kind of work, and by his courtesy I was allowed to see the French Casualty Clearing Hospital to which he took his patients from the firing line.

The state of his Ambulance car was indescribable. It is unnecessary to say that it was covered with mud; it had been hit in several places by shot and shell, and it rocked and swayed ominously as we dashed down the crowded way. He said that there was nothing vital the matter with it, and that it had got plenty of good work in it yet, which I did not doubt; but a more war-worn and utterly dilapidated vehicle never have I seen.

These voluntary motor drivers live very often

in anything but comfortable quarters. They set forth on their daily work late in the afternoon, and it is marvellous how they find their way down the dark roads, for of course they can carry no sort of light with them. When they meet the stretcher-bearers their cars are loaded up and they turn and dash away as fast as possible.

Many a thrilling story did I hear that day they gained not a little in emphasis and p[illegible] cause whilst we talked there was the i[illegible]essant boom of the heavy guns, and the frail sides of the Goods Shed which had been turned into the Casualty Hospital shook and reverberated again and again.

In speaking of the conditions under which these English motor drivers live, perhaps we may quote the words of Commandant New, the officer in charge of the British Ambulance Committee's sections working with the French Army:

"Our Ambulances were quite unfit to sleep in, but we had the use of a barn, which had a thorough system of ventilation on all sides. Various odd gipsy-like tents made of old stretcher poles, blankets, corrugated iron, canvas and wood were put up, but the weather was kind, so no matter. We took our food from the usual tin plates and cups in the porte-cochère of a farm, amongst wagons, accumulated litter, and flies in myriads. When the meal is ready a wagon and team may demand passage, and everything has to be cleared

away. Without warning the order came to move up to the front again. This meant another exhausting day for everyone, from early morn till late afternoon. When we reached our new camping ground one and all were so coated with dust that we were like old men with white hair and moustaches. There was no water, so with parchment-like lips we made our camp on the hillside far more bare than the Downs near Brighton. . . .

"Our Ambulance route runs under the very walls of ——. Picture a large town without a single resident left in its miles of streets. Entire quarters are nothing but ruins and rubbish heaps, though others have escaped. At night not a twinkle of light anywhere save, perhaps, that from the blue-white star shells overhead or a peep of moon. It is eerie and wonderful beyond words. Enormous German shells come over frequently. You must find your way in pitch darkness down narrow alley-ways which have been cleared with pick and shovel."

These Ambulances have to run between the French artillery and the firing line, and a clever device has been thought out for the safety of the cars. At one point on the road there has been set up a pole the exact height of an Ambulance, carrying a little light on the top at night. This gives the batteries the minimum elevation permissible when the road is being used. The guns bark incessantly from behind, and the German re-

plies—high explosives—come thick and fast; yet the courageous motor drivers dash between with their cars calmly and unafraid.

Commandant New gives us another glimpse of the work: "Through all this our Ambulances stand in the open near the poste de secours, a dug-out heavily sand-bagged and cut into the hillside. The wounded arrive by scores; not an instant is lost. The car is loaded and passes away into the darkness. Will it ever reach safety? Another follows and another, hour by hour, until as the dawn breaks a thick white fog obscures everything and soaks the exhausted men. But the Ambulance has to run the gauntlet again all the way. It has a groaning load of suffering; the shell holes in the road are to be avoided. Few men can keep a steady pace when the car is struck and mud and stones fly everywhere in the blackness. Still, though half-choked with smoke, nothing less is expected. At first as you descend the hill it gives some shelter, but an absolutely exposed stretch follows, and as the road winds about so the chances against you vary every fifty yards. In time you come to the zone of fewer but larger shells from the long-range guns, and further still at last you have left the bombardment booming and snapping and grumbling behind you entirely, all this time, be it remembered, travelling at five miles an hour. As one of our cars passed a level crossing a Boche shell cut the railway rails through like sticks; an-

other car had a piece of shell through the dash-board, front, and roof, and no one hurt; another fragment passed right through from side to side between the heads of the men inside, and again no harm done; but the same luck cannot always be with us."

That, alas, is true, for not long since several of these gallant motor drivers were seriously injured. The French Government has recognised the gallantry of several of the Englishmen who have undertaken this particular work for their French friends, and have decorated them with the Médaille Militaire and with the Croix de Guerre.

## CHAPTER XXI

### Canadian and Overseas V.A.D. Work.

CANADA has given such magnificent aid in sending fighting men to the help of the Mother Country, with such superb generosity, that it comes as no surprise to hear that the men and women who are left at home in the Canadian towns have done their utmost to help Red Cross work.

The ground was already prepared for this as there had always been keen interest shown in St. John Ambulance work throughout Canada, and some years ago, when the King reviewed the St. John Ambulance Brigade a great many Canadian members came over for the occasion. Many of these have actually become V.A.D. members, and all of them may well be classed as belonging to the movement, since they have given their services for Red Cross work ever since the war began.

The Duke of Connaught, who is the Sovereign Grand Prior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, became Patron of the Canadian branch, and showed an intense interest in all its work. At the annual meeting held in Ottawa, His Royal Highness said: "I would like to say that our Voluntary Aid Detachments have been found most

useful. At the present moment there are three or four Convalescent Hospitals almost entirely staffed by the Voluntary Aid Detachments. At first there was a little difficulty in their recognised position, but I am happy to be able to announce that the Militia Department have very generously and very kindly recognised the position of the Voluntary Aid Detachments, and now they form a recognised part of our Military Hospital system."

Voluntary Aid Detachments were organised in the city of Halifax and in the city of Quebec, and other Detachments have since been formed.

*History of Canadian V.A. Detachments.*

It is interesting to remember that the Militia Council (Canada) on November 29th, 1911, approved of a scheme for "the organisation of Voluntary Medical Aid in Canada." This plan was revised in 1914, and as amended was approved by the Militia Council on March 3rd of that year. Committees were created in each district and they were charged with the responsibility of organising Voluntary Aid Detachments in connection with the Militia.

It was arranged at a conference of representatives held at Government House on August 14th, 1914, with the approval of H.R.H. the Governor General, that the duty of organising Voluntary Aid Detachments should be given over to the St.

John Ambulance Association. Thus the organisation began, the first V.A. Detachment to be formed being in Halifax. The second was at Quebec, and Montreal and Ottawa quickly followed.

An enormous number of classes in First Aid and Home Nursing have been held all over Canada, with the result that thousands of qualified men and women are now in a position to form Detachments throughout the Dominion.

*The First Ottawa Women's V.A.D.*

This was formed in January, 1915, of about thirty members and officers. They laid down three distinct objects for which the Detachment was formed: (1) putting to practical use the knowledge acquired in First Aid and Home Nursing by continual practice in the making of beds, application of bandages, and the preparing of invalid diets, etc.; (2) being able in a time of calamity or public distress to turn any suitable building into an emergency Hospital, and to assist graduate nurses in the care of the sick and wounded; (3) being able to act as probationers under graduate nurses in Convalescent Homes which may be established by the Militia in Ottawa or vicinity.

Not content with having these objects merely set down upon paper, the Detachment approached the Public Works Department and asked for the use of a good-sized room. This was granted, and the public were invited to assist in furnishing the

room, with the result that there grew up in Wellington Street a room with a kitchen and bathroom attached, where the members of the Detachment could practise all the work required in a Hospital.

The Girl Guides volunteered to act as patients, and as well as classes in nursing instruction, those for the study of the Braille System for the blind were held, so that the V.A.D. members could help to teach blinded soldiers and sailors to read and write.

In September, members of the Detachment were put in charge of a tent at the Central Canada Exhibition, at which all kinds of First Aid and Home Nursing appliances were displayed.

*Useful Work.*

From time to time the members have been able to collect fruit, jam, books, etc., for the 77th Battalion of Engineers in camp on Rock Cliff, and five cases of oranges were collected and presented to the 38th Battalion on its departure from Ottawa. The men were exceedingly grateful for this, as they had no drinking water on the train.

A smart bit of work was carried out by the Detachment early in October, when the 8th Canadian Mounted Rifles passed through Ottawa from Kingston. The V.A.D. members heard that the men would be unable to have a meal from the time they left Kingston very early in the morning

until after they left Ottawa at 5 P. M. They immediately made arrangements to have hot soup, bread, and fresh fruit at the station, and the appeal to the public for funds was so generous that there was more than sufficient food to supply the six hundred and fifty officers and men who were fed that day. Three ladies of the Detachment supplied the soup, which was made in their own homes, and Colonel D. R. Street lent a field kitchen belonging to the 77th Battalion.

The Detachment has grown enormously, and the members are all very enthusiastic and anxious to help in any way that is possible.

The late Sir Sanford Fleming's residence on Sandyhill has been offered and accepted by the Militia Department to be used as a Convalescent Home for returned wounded soldiers, and members of the V.A.D. hope to be able to serve in relays as probationers under graduated nurses who will be in charge.

In the district of Quebec the Voluntary Aid Detachment at Sherbrooke Centre has been doing a fine work of mercy in looking after the requirements of sick and wounded soldiers from the Front at the Khaki Convalescent Home.

*Canadian Army Medical Corps.*

A very large number of Canadian St. John men have volunteered for active service with this corps, and are working in Hospitals or right up close to

the firing line in France or other parts of the Continent.

*Working Parties.*

These have been formed in various places in Canada and have done magnificent work for the Red Cross Society.

*Sixty V.A.D. Canadians at Work in Military Hospitals.*

During the autumn of 1916 sixty Canadian V.A.D. members came to England to give their services in Military Hospitals. Ten of these were sent on to France to work there in Military Hospitals and fifty remained in England. They have done exceedingly well and certainly reflect credit on their organisation. It is too well known a fact for it to be necessary to remark on the splendid way in which graduate (fully trained) nurses volunteered under the banner of St. John quite early in the war and came over in their hundreds to share in the responsible nursing of our men, both abroad and at home.

*V.A.D. Work Overseas.*

It is impossible in a general survey of V.A.D. work to give any real impression of all that has been accomplished by members in Hospitals in Malta, Egypt, Salonica, Russia, Serbia, Italy, Roumania and Belgium. In fact in all the Allies'

Countries British Voluntary Aid members have given of their best.

The story of those who took part in the great retreat in Serbia has been told so well that I need do no more than touch upon it, but it proved that our women, who went to the succour of these defeated but unconquered people, have courage and skill in an extraordinary measure.

In Malta and Egypt the members have worked splendidly in the great hospitals, always under the direction of fully trained nurses. In Belgium they are still at work, but not in the numbers that went to that stricken country in the early days of the war, when the sudden invasion of the enemy devastated the fair lands and the beautiful old cities which were beloved not only by their own people, but by thousands of travellers who grieve to know of the wanton destruction of some of the most exquisite buildings in the world.

Quite recently, however, a V.A.D. member who has worked in an Anglo-Belgian Hospital for nearly a year told me that it was so regular an occurrence for enemy aeroplanes to bomb the town that no one took any notice of them, especially as they seldom do any real damage.

*Newfoundland.* Several members of the Ambulance Detachment of the First Newfoundland Regiment fell in Gallipoli, one of them whilst performing a deed of greatest gallantry.

*Orange Free State.* A great many ladies have

qualified in First Aid and Home Nursing here and many of them have volunteered for service as nurses at the National Hospital. Their work has been excellent and has been highly commended.

*Transvaal.* Voluntary Aid Detachments are being formed here.

*St. John Ambulance Brigade Overseas.*

Some of the latest Detachments to be utilised at the Front are those supplied from within the Empire of India for service in Mesopotamia. Brigade Overseas men are serving practically in every theatre of war where the British Forces are engaged.

*Peace and War Work.*

The two were curiously joined together for me suddenly one night when I was doing dressings for men on a train which was passing down to a Base in France. The few of us at the Aid Post who had been put on to do dressings were surrounded with wounded men. It was the middle of a dark and stormy night and we had nothing better than a single lamp as light. Suddenly my hand was seized and in the dim light I discerned the uniform and badges of a R.A.M.C. Orderly, but the face was unfamiliar. "Are you not Miss Bowser? I used to work with you on Hampstead Heath on Bank Holidays!"

I knew the voice in a moment. It was a St.

John man who had regularly given up his Bank Holidays in order to come and do ambulance work at the tent on Hampstead Heath, where we always had a number of accidents to attend to in the course of the day. For years in peace time we had worked together, and now we met under these strange circumstances, both glad to have had that other training in years when war was only a chimera.

To be prepared for all eventualities is the secret which every country and every nation must realise is a vital one. But however well prepared may be an Army and a Navy, there must exist an organisation for the supplementary care of the wounded and sick in war time. The civilian work of the St. John Ambulance Association and Brigade in England and her Empire laid a strong foundation, especially amongst the men, for the work of the Voluntary Aid Detachment scheme which was formulated by the War Office in 1909 and actually started in 1910. That it is not perfect no one would deny, but when it is remembered that it involves the administration of millions of pounds sterling, of the use of hundreds of thousands of articles for hospital equipment, and sends forth thousands of men and women, who voluntarily give their services, all over the Kingdom and to every theatre of war, it can be said to be nothing but a success. The Medical authorities in the Services, the doctors in hospitals and the

trained nurses agree to-day that they could not have managed without the help given to them by the Red Cross and its personnel.

Upon the man or woman debarred by age or health or sex from participating in the greatest honour of all—fighting for one's country—the next best privilege which can fall upon him or her is to serve under the Red Cross. We who have been allowed to give some little aid, in whatsoever humble a manner, know that the only alleviation in the awful sorrows brought about by the war is that gained by working for the men who give their lives, and more than their lives—their eyesight, their limbs and their health—in the cause of righteousness.

D 629.G7 B788s 1917a

01110420R

NLM 05007242 8

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE